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Japanese Animation: Magical Girls and Atomic Bomb Sperm

History, Melodrama, and Ideology in Chinese Cinema

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From Peep Show to Palace

The Birth of American Film

David Robinson

Foreword by Martin Scorsese

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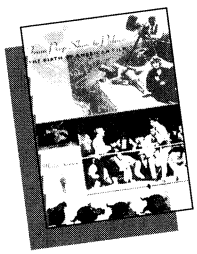

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Film and Culture Series, John Belton, Editor

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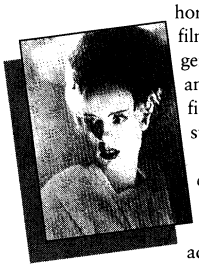

1930s horror films—including hypnosis, mad-doctor, and jungle-horror movies—proved to be lucrative ventures for film companies. The first book to center on this genre, ATTACK OF THE LEADING LADIES combines analysis of its gender dynamics with the publicity, film reviews, and Production Code materials surrounding each of its blockbuster releases.

Berenstein challenges established views of classical horror cinema, contending that the genre is marked by malleable gender roles, not by entrenched conventional personas. She addresses the complex spectatorship issues posed by a genre so concerned with disguise, offering a new model of spectatorship-as-drag—where the observer adopts the gender attributes of the central figure.

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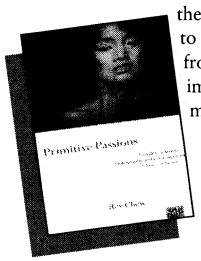

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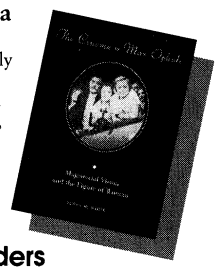

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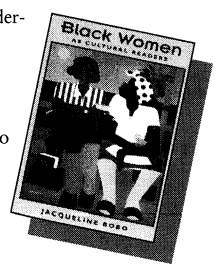

The first in-depth study of black women as cultural consumers, BLACK WOMEN AS CULTURAL READERS is unique in its use of both interviews and textual readings to reach an understanding of the power of this social group, too often overlooked in critical study. Bobo looks beyond traditional critical interpretations of major Hollywood productions like *The Color Purple*, using her audience-centered approach to show that African-American women produce meanings from texts in ways that have potential for empowerment.

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Annalee Newitz

Magical Girls and Atomic Bomb Sperm

Japanese Animation in America

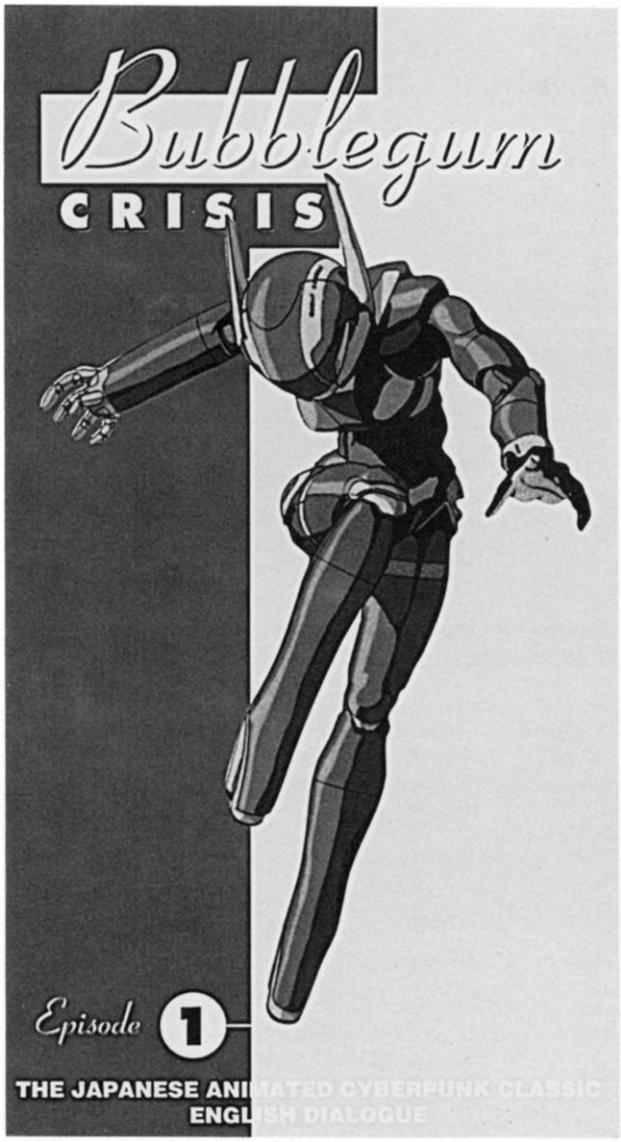
In the past few years, there has been a noticeable escalation in the availability of Japanese animated films in America. At my local Blockbuster video store, a new "animation" section was created several months ago which is largely comprised of Japanese animation: one can rent everything from movies like the highly acclaimed *Akira* to a series of videos from popular animated TV shows aired in America such as *Robotech* and *Speed Racer*. Known to fans as *anime*, Japanese animation is available mostly on videocassette or laserdisc, and it is far more than just cartoons for children. Often graphically violent and sexual, *anime* range from comic romances about high school students to pornographic tales of demons whose penises are larger than skyscrapers. *Anime* can be feature films, OVA (original video animation, or "straight to video" releases), or Japanese television series collected on video. A "Japanese animation festival" on the cable "Sci Fi Channel" introduced American viewers all over the country to popular *anime* such as the satirical film *Project A-ko* and the science fiction series *Dominion: Tank Police*. Furthermore, the past seven years have seen a massive expansion and organization of American fans of Japanese animation; clubs, conventions, and fanzines

dedicated to *anime* and its fan culture have sprung up on college campuses and in large cities all over the United States.[1]

Small distribution companies in the United States will sometimes make *anime* available to fans who shop at specialty video stores or through catalogues. More often than not, fans get their *anime* from each other: there are networks of fans who use home multimedia technology to subtitle *anime* brought from Japan. Using a software program designed for this purpose, fans transfer *anime* from laserdisc to videotape, editing in the subtitles. Many of the *anime* contain this edited-in subtitle: "Subtitled for fans by fans. Not for sale or rent." I found this on bootlegged tapes and on tapes I rented from a local specialty video store. With a few exceptions, such as the kinds of mainstream videos one can find at Blockbuster or on American television, *anime* are circulated through fan communities, either at conventions or fan clubs. Fans of *anime* in the United States are engaging in what critics such as John Fiske or Constance Penley might call "appropriation."[2] That is, they are transforming Japanese culture for their own uses, which are somewhat different from the uses to which it might be put in Japan. Whereas *anime* are mainstream culture in Japan, in America they are still "alternative culture," particularly when we start talking about the hard-to-find videos. For this reason, American fans enjoy *anime* partly because it allows them to feel as if they have specialized knowledge ordinary Americans do not. On another level, the fans' appropriation of *anime* involves translating and duplicating it so that it is accessible to a wider audience in the West. This allows them to convert a Japanese product into a uniquely American one. What might be satisfying for Americans about this is that it essentially allows them to "steal" Japanese culture away from Japan. Perhaps this is some form of revenge on a consumer culture which seems to have surpassed their own in its power and complexity?

Animation could be described as just another lucrative Japanese export commodity—like high technology or cars—which is consumed avidly by Americans who often feel it is unlike anything available in the West. In 1980-81, exports of Japanese television shows were led by animated programs, which accounted for 56% of total television exports.[3] But what kinds of social issues are involved in the sudden popularity of *anime* in America? Certainly, there is a strong possibility that this popularity might be both a result of and a cause for American anxieties about the potency of its national culture in the world. We can look at this anxiety through several critical lenses: by considering how gendered and sexual relations get represented in *anime*, by examining what it means to be a fan of another country's mass culture, and in theorizing how America understands itself in relation to Japanese cultural imperialism. Most importantly, watching *anime* gives Americans a chance to reflect on their own (national) culture in displaced form. Although *anime* does often strike us as utterly different, or "other," it also quite noticeably resembles—and is influenced by—American mass culture and generic narratives. That Americans might be interested in looking at their own culture through Japanese eyes tells us that Americans' feelings about their own culture are deeply bound up with America's evolving relationship with Japan.

Bubblegum Crisis: A "Magical Girl" patrolling Mega Tokyo in A.D. 2033 (opposite page); Hayakawa, an *otaku* pinup girl, in *Kimagure Orange Road* (above)



Bubblegum Crisis: The ambiguously gendered, high-tech *anime* crime fighter

Otaku in Love

Otaku is the Japanese slang term for people who become particularly loyal fans of a subculture. It is somewhat insulting to be called *otaku*, and it gets translated into English as "fanboy." *Otaku* is a term often used to describe a fan of *anime* subcultures, and he is usually understood to be obsessive, socially inept, or pathetic. I use the pronoun "he" for a reason—while quite racially mixed as a group, *otaku* are overwhelmingly male, particularly in the U.S.[4] For this reason, it is important to understand that what is at stake for Americans watching *anime* is certainly bound up with gender identity, especially masculine identity. What is striking for the scholar of gender and film in the United States, and more generally in the West, is that some genres avidly consumed by American *otaku* are often conceived of as "women's genres" in the West. For instance, one of the most popular *anime* genres is the romantic comedy,[5] which features male point-of-view characters. Aside from the romantic comedy genre, the kinds of generic narratives popular with American fans are more in line with Western expectations about gendered taste preferences: *otaku* enjoy *mecha* (a term used to designate science-fiction or action narratives which focus mostly on technology) and various shades of fantasy-horror. Looking at these three (sometimes overlapping) genres,[6] we can form a fairly complete analysis of gendered and sexual representations in *anime*.

The romantic comedy genre can be characterized by one of its chief subgenres: "magical girls." Magical girls appear in a number of romantic comedies such as *Video Girl Ai*, *Urusei Yatsura*, *Tenchi Muyo*, and *Oh! My Goddess!* All feature young men who have romantic, but non-sexual, relationships with women who possess superhuman powers. These powers might range from preternatural strength to psychic abilities and interdimensional traveling. Ai comes to life out of a videocassette, Lum in *Urusei Yatsura* is an alien, the women in *Tenchi Muyo* are spirits, and Belldandy in *Oh! My Goddess!* is a goddess Keiichi (the college student protagonist) accidentally orders over the phone from the "Goddess Relief Agency." Like American sitcoms of the 1960s such as *Bewitched* and *I Dream of Jeannie*, the magical girl genre features women who are simultaneously powerful and traditionally feminine. Often, jokes center around the mishaps involved in the magical girl's effort to hide her powers so that she may appear demure. The men in these *anime* are young, bewildered, and sexually inexperienced—they are, as one *anime* fan put it to me, the kind of "nice guy" we hope can win the heart of a "special girl" (or a magical girl).

Relationships between characters in the magical girl genre are characterized by slapstick-style encounters which are sexy but innocent, and realistic but fantastical. In *Oh! My Goddess!*, for example, Keiichi is a fairly "realistic" cartoon figure, drawn to appear like an ordinary college freshman. His daily experiences, as well as his friends, are also believable, intended to evoke the kinds of feelings and situations a young adult audience might encounter. Keiichi lives in his college dorm and tries desperately to fit in with

a group of slightly older students who mock him about his lack of experience with women. Like an ordinary young man, he studies frantically for exams, goes to the beach, and loves to race his motorcycle. His magical girl Belldandy (the goddess) even arrives in his life in a ludicrously pedestrian manner: trying to order take-out food over the phone, Keiichi accidentally orders a goddess instead. Belldandy is the one "fantastical" animated figure in the show. She floats; her hair is impossibly long and fluffy; her eyes sparkle constantly; and her body is so perfectly proportioned we cannot help but remember that we are, after all, watching a cartoon. When Belldandy offers Keiichi one wish, he makes the mistake of asking that she remain with him always. This magical stipulation, then, becomes the joke and the romance at the heart of *Oh! My Goddess!* Belldandy, the flagrantly magical figure, must accompany Keiichi everywhere in his incredibly normal life. After getting him kicked out of his (all male) dormitory, Belldandy must find a way to make herself a part of Keiichi's world, and he must do the same for her. Usually they do this by trying—humorously and often unsuccessfully—to hide Belldandy's true nature.

The magical girl subgenre, based upon the idea that women should conceal their power, would probably not get produced in the United States at this point in history, particularly since the advent of feminism and the women's rights movement. Even Disney, a notoriously conservative corporation, attempted to respond (albeit minimally) to feminist issues in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) by de-emphasizing Beauty's breast size and turning her into a more assertive and intelligent character. In Japan, feminist issues are less openly recognized as legitimate social concerns, and their popular culture reflects this tradition. When American fans consume magical girl *anime*, partly what they enjoy about the genre is its historical incongruence with American mainstream culture. Or, to put it another way: they are enjoying depictions of women which take for granted that women are subordinate to men. Magical girls exercise their power, like Jeannie in *I Dream of Jeannie*, largely in the home or in their private relationship with a young man—they do not, for example, ordinarily use their power to get work or influence outside the domestic realm. Furthermore, the idea that a powerful woman would have to be "magical" in the first place is an indication that magical girl *anime* place female power itself in the realm of fantasy. In America, female public authority is an undeniable—if contested—social reality; hence, I believe, Americans consume magical girl *anime* as a form of nostalgia for the kind of social situations made possible by traditional gender roles. That these *anime* are often comic is in some ways a form of "cover" for the American fan of magical girl *anime*. He is able to have his nostalgia and laugh it off all at once, thus propping up and denying what is essentially his enjoyment of male-dominated gender hierarchy.

But the American *otaku*'s pleasure in romantic comedy *anime* goes beyond simply experiencing nostalgia for male domination. While traditional gender roles in America are associated with various kinds of social oppression and prejudice, they are also linked to an idealized notion of romance. This idealized romance is common in romantic comedy *anime*, particularly outside the slapstick magical girl genre. Male heterosexual fans might enjoy romantic comedy *anime* not just because they wish they could dominate women, but also to experience an "old-fashioned" romantic story. A "good" romance in this vein is made possible to a certain degree by the Japanese practice of segregating girls and boys in public situations and placing a strong taboo on sexuality. As a result, relationships between young men and women in romantic *anime* are based upon sexual innuendo and deferral—that is, they are about fantasized expectations, rather than sexual consummation and its aftermath (a common theme in contemporary American romance). In *anime*, romantic love is possible precisely because overt sexuality is not. This sets up, for American audiences, what might appear to be a more "innocent" and intensely passionate series of encounters between the characters. Ultimately, the romantic comedy offers the American *otaku* representations of male sexual passivity (or non-sexual eroticism) which are simultaneously seductive and terrifying.

The TV series *Kimagure Orange Road*, which is one of the most popular romantic comedy *anime* with American fans, is a soap opera-type narrative which offers us a glimpse of masculine desire American men see very little of in their own mass culture. Its male point-of-view character wants to fall in love, rather than simply experience sex. Like the magical girl subgenre, many of its basic themes are, for an American audience, somewhat anachronistic. *Kimagure Orange Road* is the story of a "magical boy,"[7] a high-school student named Kyousuke who has telekinetic powers (he comes from a family of telekinetics). He falls in love with a young woman named Madoka, who is not magical, but nevertheless is so physically strong that she routinely beats up whole groups of men. Clearly, both characters are slightly fantastical, and this aspect of the narrative is enhanced by the fact that

Kyousuke continually has fanciful romantic dreams about wooing, kissing, or simply being near Madoka. He imagines himself with her on the beach at sunset, or watching her play the saxophone. Indeed, the clichéd image of a lonely Madoka playing sad saxophone music is an important, recurring romantic motif in *Kimagure Orange Road*, and sets the tone for much of Kyousuke's romantic longings. In a scene to which fans often refer as a perfect *Kimagure Orange Road* moment, Kyousuke hides while Madoka—who is portrayed as a kind of social outcast—plays the blues on her sax in an empty classroom. It is enough for him simply to be with her, even if she does not realize he is there.

That Kyousuke should be so excited, bashful, and embarrassed by his desire to date Madoka might be a source of amusement for American fans, but Kyousuke's emotions are also the source of this *anime*'s potency as a romance. In the United States, young men (and, increasingly, young women) are encouraged by their popular youth culture to experience their romantic feelings as overtly sexual. Romantic comedies in America are frequently sex comedies, not stories about emotions and wishes. I think one reason young American men become fans of romantic comedy *anime* is because these narratives represent a form of heterosexual masculinity which is not rooted in sexual prowess, but romantic feelings. *Anime* offer to the post-sexual revolution generation stories which suggest that young men and women do not need to have sex in order to experience love. Admittedly, the kind of love recommended by these *anime* is often based on social values American feminism has done right to condemn. But the Americans who consume them are also responding to—and perhaps attempting to escape—the hypersexuality of their own media culture by reimagining romance as a relationship which goes beyond the purely sexual. In particular, *Kimagure Orange Road* offers young men a chance to identify with a character who "gets the girl" because he loves and admires her from afar—passively.

Like *Kimagure Orange Road*, the TV series *Ranma 1/2* is very popular with American fans. However, *Ranma 1/2* is not romantic like *Kimagure Orange Road*, and overtly treats sexual themes bound to arouse heterosexual male discomfort. It concerns another magical boy, Ranma, whose special power is actually called a "curse": when splashed with cold water, he turns into a beautiful, curvaceous girl. His father Genma suffers a similar curse which turns him into a giant panda when he is splashed with cold water. Both return to their "normal" bodies when splashed with hot water. Unlike most romantic comedy *anime*, *Ranma 1/2* features a good deal of nudity and sexualized encounters between Ranma and nearly everyone he knows. A frequent joke revolves around someone squeezing Ranma's breasts in order to "believe" that he has transformed into a female. Ultimately, there is really only one difference between Ranma-the-male and Ranma-the-female besides their gendered bodies: female Ranma has red hair, and male Ranma has black hair. Both wear the same clothes, and both are martial arts experts. But it is clear that becoming female is a problem for Ranma. He is perpetually trying to hide his female half at school; and many of the slapstick routines in the series depict his efforts to avoid being splashed with cold water in public (although at home, Genma is constantly throwing him into a handy pool of water outside).

Ranma 1/2 betrays a number of male fears at the heart of the comedy romance genre, which emerge full-blown in the *mecha* and horror-fantasy *anime* I will discuss in a moment. Quite simply, *Ranma 1/2* demonstrates to the young man who enjoys romantic comedy *anime* that he is constantly in danger of becoming a girl. Because women are associated in these *anime* with passivity, a character like Ranma stands in for male anxieties about losing power or being ridiculed. Indeed, Genma uses Ranma's transformative ability as a way of humiliating and punishing him. "I am so ashamed of you!" Genma yells at one point after turning Ranma into a girl by throwing him in the pool. Like Ranma, the male *anime* fan has a "feminine half" who enjoys passively consuming animated fantasies about love. His attachment to non-sexual romance might be said to feminize him. Especially for the heterosexual male fan who watches *anime* in an American context, this fear would be particularly acute, since American romantic comedies are aimed at a largely female audience. But the American *otaku*'s worries about gender transposition, solicited humorously in *Ranma 1/2*, go beyond a fear that he might be enjoying "women's culture" too much. He is, more importantly, enjoying this culture with other men. American fans consume and discuss *anime* in heavily male-dominated environments.

One of Ranma's biggest problems in the series is Kuno, a young man who has fallen in love with Ranma's female half and constantly asks her out on dates. Ranma-the-male has a nightmare about Kuno kissing him, and is clearly alarmed by Kuno's desire (which is not properly homosexual, since he desires

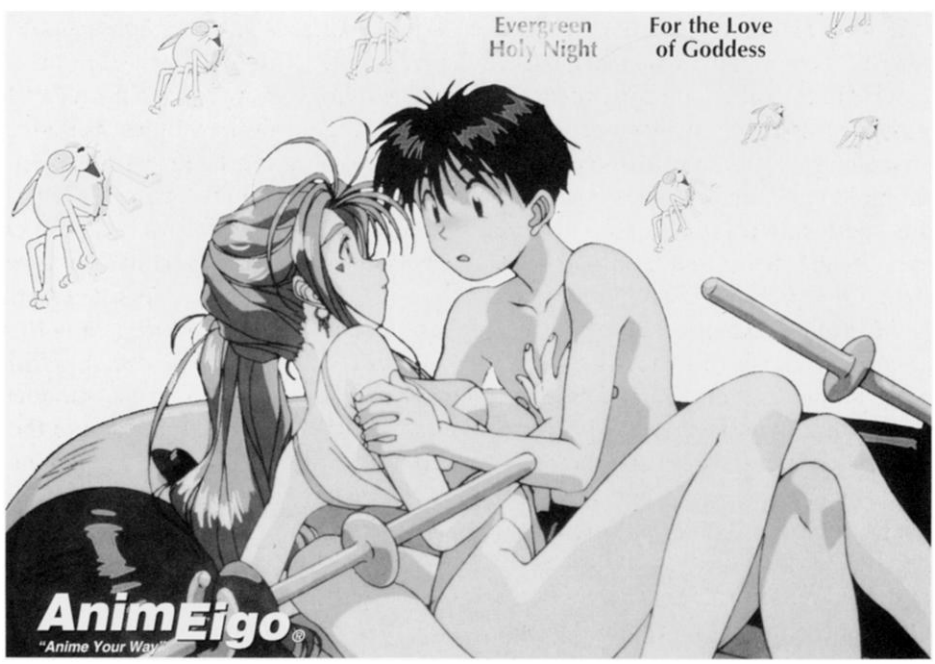
The Overfiend: The uncontrollable, monstrous human body of *anime*

Ranma-the-female, but Ranma nevertheless understands it as such). Furthermore, Ranma's only love interest is the tomboyish Akane, who can beat up all the boys in their high school without batting an eyelid. Akane is an ambiguously gendered character who seems more like a young man than anything else—in fact, Ranma jokes with her that his breasts are larger than hers when he is female. Clearly, one of the issues for young heterosexual men enjoying depictions of male sexual passivity is a fear of becoming bisexual, or even homosexual.[8] Hence, enjoying these *anime* with other men might also be a source of discomfort. Interestingly enough, one of the most popular depictions of Ranma on fan T-shirts and posters is of Ranma-the-female being emphatically feminine in a skimpy bikini, which she rarely (if ever) wears in the show. That is, even within the straight male *otaku* culture, Ranma is consumed as a sex object. Fans are thus put into the unwanted position of identifying with the ambiguous sexual orientation of a character like Kuno, and are therefore understandably nervous about Ranma's male half—precisely because they are somehow attracted to his female half. Keeping Ranma as female as possible in fan culture would certainly help alleviate this nervousness. But however you look at him/her, Ranma represents a kink in the heterosexual *otaku*'s desire.

Multicultural Sexuality

While sexuality and explicit representations of intercourse are not the focus of most romantic comedy *anime*, they are foregrounded in the *mecha* and fantasy-horror genres. Often, however, sexuality is coded in certain ways,[9] specifically in the *mecha anime*. A perfect example of this kind of coding occurs in the highly surrealistic live-action film, *Tetsuo the Iron Man*, which has achieved cult status both in Japan and in the United States. While not specifically an *anime*, it deals with a number of *anime* themes, particularly what happens to people who enjoy fan culture too intensely. *Tetsuo the Iron Man* is the story of a *mecha otaku*, a young man named Tetsuo who is gradually converted into a heap of machine parts during the course of the film. His transformation begins when he is hit by a cab, although clearly there is supposed to be a connection between his *otaku*-style obsession with machines and his transformation. The most graphic portions of the film come when he begins turning into "iron man"—he discovers that the flesh of his leg has been torn open by a thick metal cable which originates inside his body. Later, when large portions of his body have been converted into machine parts, his penis turns into a huge industrial drill which he uses to penetrate and kill his girlfriend.

Once he has done that, his transformation is complete, and the rest of the film is caught up in a final fight scene between Tetsuo and another iron man. *Tetsuo the Iron Man* is an ironic meditation on popular culture and its *otaku* which tries to make a connection between consuming popular culture and being physically transformed by it: Tetsuo the *mecha otaku* becomes *mecha*. His masculine sexuality is clearly important to this transformation, since his drill penis is nearly the last part of his body to go *mecha*, and performs quite spectacularly when it does. Looking at these images, we have to ask: What kind of sexuality is Tetsuo acting out here? There are really two answers to this question, one having to do with sexuality specifically, and another having to do with why fans consume popular culture.



Oh My Goddess!: Adolescent sexuality—one of the recurring motifs of Japanese animation

In the *mecha anime, Guyver: Bio-Booster Armor*,[10] we find another example of Tetsuo's form of sexuality. After encountering a piece of alien technology, the young male protagonist in *Guyver* finds himself enveloped in a huge, high-tech suit of armor. While it greatly enhances his physical strength and stature, the "guyver armor" also fuses with him at a biological level: it penetrates his face and body with metal tentacles and causes him excruciating pain. This scene is highly reminiscent of Tetsuo's discovery of the metal cable in his leg. The guyver armor helps its wearer to defeat a monstrous mutant "bionoid," then evaporates. While men who come into contact with this guyver armor experience agony as it first penetrates their bodies, the women who don guyver armor are penetrated vaginally by its metal tentacles, stripped naked, and given what appear to be orgasms as the armor envelops them. Put simply, what hurts men about this human-*mecha* fusion is a source of pleasure and gratification for women.

Furthermore, in terms of female representation, *mecha* is treading the same ground as romantic comedy. There is a subgenre of *mecha* which closely parallels the "magical girl" subgenre. These *mecha*, such as *Bubblegum Crisis*, *Dominion: Tank Police*, *Iczer-1*, and *Appleseed*, feature women or female mutants who use guyver-like armor or high-tech ships and motorcycles to fight crime, corruption, or monsters of various types (especially bionoids, which appear in *Bubblegum Crisis* and its spin-off, *AD Police*). Unlike magical girls, however, these women use their power openly, but tend to hide their gender in one way or another. Especially in the series *Bubblegum Crisis*, the team of women are so heavily armored that occasionally a character will marvel, "You're women under there?" What these *anime* demonstrate is the way male and female bodies are largely indistinguishable once wedded to *mecha* technologies.

But at the same time, the male body appears to put up more resistance to *mecha* conversion: after all,

Tetsuo's penis is the last part of his body to be mechanized, and the guyver armor suits women far better than men (at least when they merge with it). This brings me back to my original question: What kind of sexuality is this? First of all, this is a kind of sexuality which allows for the creation of new beings. Tetsuo becomes the "iron man"; people in the guyver armor become half-human, half-technological; and the group of women in *Bubblegum Crisis* go from jobs as office girls, shop clerks, and singers to being vigilante cyborg cops chasing down bionoids in Mega-Tokyo. Bodies manipulated by *mecha* science are merged with pieces of technology in order to "give birth" to new creatures. In *All-Purpose Cultural Cat Girl Nuku Nuku*, for example, the main character Ryunosuke gains a "new sister" when his father, the scientist, creates Nuku Nuku out of the body of a robot and the brain of a cat. This is an instance in which childbearing is equated specifically with the merging of technology and biology. Female bodies and sexuality are therefore "best suited" to *mecha*—and male bodies and sexuality are disfigured by it—precisely because it is related to reproduction and giving birth.

Mecha reproduction also involves the co-dependence or synthesis of two radically different orders of being: human and machine. While visible gender difference in *mecha* is downplayed—men and women look the same in armor or spaceships—the differences between human bodies and *mecha* are quite stark. Clearly, these *anime* are telling a story about a very specific form of reproduction, one in which offspring are hybrid beings rather than duplicates of their "parents." This kind of reproduction, which we find in horror-fantasy *anime* as well, often ends up serving as an allegory for the horrors of miscegenation—and, implicitly, the horrors of multiculturalism. Miscegenation is, after all, one sexual corollary to American multiculturalism.

In Japan, a country with a history of isolationism and racism, miscegenation is a source of shame and anxiety.[11] Although miscegenation is also a problem for Americans, United States history is fraught with both miscegenation and its offspring: hence, Americans are at least more familiar (and perhaps slightly more comfortable) with the idea that their culture is a "multiculture." Japanese political and cultural leaders, in general, do not wish to define their culture as "multi" in any way. Multiculturalism is a concept quite alien to Japanese society, in which non-Japanese people—such as Koreans—face intense discrimination and contempt. Not surprisingly, then, horror-fantasy *anime* tend to represent the merging of separate cultures, realms, or species as socially disruptive. The movie *Vampire Hunter D*, for instance, centers upon a half-vampire character whose goodness is confirmed when he battles to preserve the boundaries between the supernatural and human realms. Although he is himself the product of a vampire-human union, he nevertheless proves his honor by keeping the worlds which produced him as separate as possible.

3 X 3 Eyes is another fantasy-horror series about the chaos that ensues after separate species come together: the series is about Pai, a non-human girl from Tibet, and her relationship with a young human man named Yakomo.[12] Pursued by mutants and spirits which interfere with Yakomo's social life as a high school student, Pai eats Yakomo's soul and forces him to help her on her quest to become human. No matter how much she wishes to do good, Pai cannot help but destroy those around her precisely because she is trying to bridge the gap between historically separate social groups. There is little room for "multiculturalism" in these *anime*, for all "others" are monsters, and all monsters are out to destroy human society. To the extent that the Japanese associate multiculturalism with America, it becomes a double source of dread. While multiculturalism is at odds with Japanese monoculturalism, it is more importantly connected to the United States, which invaded and occupied Japan for decades after violently defeating them in World War II. Ultimately, narratives which raise issues of multiculturalism in Japan—however covertly—may depict horror and violation because they are associated with a historical period when Japan was invaded by another, very different culture and was powerless to stop it.

The OVA series *The Overfiend* offers the most coherent instance of an anti-multicultural bent in *anime*. The Overfiend is a being who has the power to unite the human world with "the demon world" and "the man-beast world," and we discover early on that this power is dangerous because it will lead to chaos, death, and—most horrifically—miscegenation between beings from each world. In fact, one character's vision of the post-Overfiend future depicts a burning city filled with humans copulating quite graphically with beasts and demons. When the Overfiend begins to manifest himself, we discover his power is directly linked to sexual reproduction. Nagumo, the Overfiend's father, first experiences his supernatural powers when engaged in intercourse. His penis becomes so large that it causes his partner's body to explode; then it grows to the point where it bursts out of the roof of the building he is in and destroys the city in a

flaming blast of sperm. Watching this animated image, it is clear that his penis has become some kind of atomic bomb. This "atomic blast" sets the stage for the birth of the Overfiend, who will allow the human realm to be invaded by demons and man-beasts.

We might understand *The Overfiend* to refer allegorically to American intervention in Japan during and after World War II. Since the American occupation of Japan did begin with an atomic blast, and did cause the intermingling of Japanese and American cultures, it is hard to dismiss the possibility of this interpretation. *The Overfiend* is associated with hypersexuality and a post-multicultural world (the world after the realms come together). Moreover, as the Overfiend's power begins to spread, a number of men affected by it find their penises growing enormous, or by contrast, mutating into other kinds of organs such as eyes, tongues, or tentacles. Sometimes, penises become detached and are passed between characters as if they were magic wands or weapons. That is, the penis in *The Overfiend* is quite clearly metaphorical; but rather than standing in for "power" or "force," penises literally become dangerous and destructive objects associated with masculine sexuality. What *The Overfiend*'s gigantic, mutated penises and sperm grotesquely caricature, I would suggest, is American imperialism in Japan.

The American occupation of Japan is a topic which has also been treated in "serious" *manga* (the Japanese word for comic books) such as *Barefoot Gen* and dramatic *anime* films such as *Grave of the Fireflies*. That is, the occupation is still a topic very much alive in Japanese popular culture, as both a manifest and a repressed theme. Interestingly, American influence on Japanese culture during the occupation is in many ways responsible for both the look and generic narrative qualities of *anime* in Japan. Frederik Schodt, in his book *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics,* writes that Japanese styles of animation are heavily influenced both by Western political cartoons and Disney animation.[13] Famous *anime* director/illustrator Hayao Miyazaki (*Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind, My Neighbor Totoro, Kiki's Delivery Service*) is open about his admiration for Disney's animation style. In other words, *anime* is itself a product of the American influence on Japanese everyday life, especially after World War II. Therefore, we might understand Tetsuo's hideous transformation, for example, to be a comment specifically upon the way Japanese society has so eagerly consumed American-influenced mass culture. Tetsuo's adoring consumption of American popular culture in several scenes is equated with his later deterioration. Specifically, his penis, the mark of his (masculine) strength, is converted into a machine part. In other words, this movie offers a connection between consuming American mass culture and a problem with regulating the "source" of one's strength. Tetsuo's sexuality, like that of the Overfiend, represents both the physical and the cultural alterations we associate with cross-national—and multicultural—relations. That this representation is both ironic and ugly drives home the point that what we have here is a series of critical looks at American culture.

American *anime* fans—of all racial backgrounds—may be getting pleasure from *anime*'s negative representations of miscegenation and American multiculturalism for reasons surprisingly similar to those of the Japanese audience. That is, Americans may enjoy Japanese *anime* precisely because it criticizes American culture. A fan suggested to me that American audiences are tired of being blamed for the oppression of various minority groups and nations in the world, and respond to these *anime* as a respite from "political correctness" guilt so often talked about in United States mass media.[14] Racist or nationalist sentiment in *anime* might seem refreshing to *anime* fans because it harks back to a less complicated (although more oppressive) series of relations in United States culture. I would also add that *mecha* and horror-fantasy *anime* are probably reassuring to American audiences precisely because they offer representations of traditional masculinity and male culture which are recognizable as such to a Western audience. In the United States, audiences are used to the idea that men enjoy—and are target markets for—movies about "action hero" men, machines, and gory special effects. This is in contrast to the romantic comedy, which is generally seen as a woman's genre in the West. That is, both the gendered and racial implications of these *anime* might elicit the approval of an American audience unhappy with contemporary progressive changes in representations of American identity. Finally, because Japanese *anime* rarely disparage American culture overtly—or unequivocally—American fans can also consume them without necessarily acknowledging their negative American stereotypes.[15]

Textual Dependence

What I have been describing, in part, is the way Japanese *anime* take issue with past and present American cultural imperialism in Japan. Allegorical

representations of America, and Japanese people who consume American-influenced culture, are often frightening or heavily satiric. What is therefore ironic about Japanese animation fans in America is that they are, in many ways, the first generation of United States citizens to experience cultural imperialism in reverse: that is, they are being colonized by Japanese pop culture, rather then the other way around. One specific instance of this kind of cultural imperialist role-reversal in action came when Disney's "original story" for 1994's *The Lion King* was rumored to be a rip-off of the Japanese animated television series (shown in the U.S. during the early 1960s) called *Simba the White Lion*.[16] Osamu Tezuka, the creator of Simba and Astroboy, is Japan's equivalent of Walt Disney, and his work was in fact inspired by Disney animation. But these days it appears that Disney is taking its inspiration from Japanese animation—certainly a sign that cultural influences are now traveling both ways (if not in a wholly opposite direction).

While we are used to understanding American media culture as imperialist, particularly through its dissemination in the Third World, Jeremy Tunstall has noted that Japan has always been an exception to the rule of what he calls American "media imperialism." Through setting up their own media monopoly and regulating American advertising and entertainment programming imports, Japanese media have remained largely insulated.[17] Looking at the reception of Japanese animation in America, it seems possible that Japanese culture might become a "colonizing" force in other countries, particularly the United States. I make this comment strictly as an observation of what American culture seems to be experiencing, not as an attack on Japanese culture per se.

Gendered and sexual anxieties common to the romantic comedy, *mecha*, and horror-fantasy genres can tell us something about the structure of Japanese cultural imperialism—as an American fantasy and as an economic reality. I suggested before that what makes the romantic comedy *Ranma 1/2* notable is the way it deals explicitly with male fears about becoming feminized *otaku*—particularly in the United States, where romantic comedy is a "woman's genre." This anxiety, however, must be understood in the context of *The Overfiend*'s allegorical representations of miscegenation and imperialism. To explain why the *otaku* is feminized for consuming Japanese animation, and the Overfiend is hypermasculinized because he is associated with imperialism, we must deploy a widely accepted theorem of multicultural feminism: relationships in which women are subordinate to men often

Bubblegum Crisis: An *anime* mercenary, battling androids controlled by corporate bad guys

stand in for or mirror imperialist relationships in which one country is subordinate to the other.[18] This theorem certainly helps to explain why Ranma is not only feminized, but also associated with China, a country invaded and occupied by Japanese imperialist forces several times during the 20th century. Ranma's "curse" is in fact a Chinese curse, which he got during martial arts training with Genma in China. Moreover, Ranma wears his hair in a queue and his clothing is Chinese; at school, the students often refer to him as "the one in Chinese clothing." Ranma's feminization, in other words, is bound up with his Chinese identification. On the other hand, the Overfiend's ability to cause separate realms to colonize one another—to be an imperialist power—is associated with the deploy-

Ranma 1/2: The two faces of Ranma—the young boy who turns into a beautiful girl

ment of (American) atomic bombs from his penis. One might say that he literally penetrates a Japanese city with his erection, later blowing it up with his ejaculate. What matters here is that these figures bring together feminization with colonization, and masculinity with a colonizing country.

When Americans are *anime otaku*, they are, in a sense, being colonized by Japanese pop culture. Even if they are from Asian racial backgrounds, they are still Americans, and they are rejecting their national culture in favor of another national culture. Furthermore, the act of doing so seems to threaten them with feminization. Here, "feminization" is a way of figuring the kind of disempowerment and dependence a nation experiences when it is colonized. Albert Memmi, in his *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, explains that the attempt to take on or enjoy a colonizing nation's culture is one important way in which the colonized cope with their subordinate status. While he is speaking of direct and coercive forms of colonization, I think we can understand how his points might work within the context of cultural imperialism. Describing the psychology of the colonized, he writes:

> A product manufactured by the colonizer is accepted with confidence. His habits, clothing, food, architecture are closely copied, even if inappropriate. . . . This fit of passion for the colonizer's values would not be suspect, however, if it did not involve such a negative side. . . . The crushing of the colonized is included among the colonizer's values. As soon as the colonized adopts those values, he similarly adopts his own condemnation.[19]

This description reminds us of the way fan culture works, particularly when something about the status of "fan" threatens feminization and disempowerment. The American *anime* fan is deliberately choosing to enjoy a foreign culture which—in this case—often ridicules and belittles his native culture. Elsewhere, Memmi suggests that the relationship between colonizer and colonized is one of dependence—this point goes back to Hegel's famous dialectic of master and slave. I would point out that American fans of Japanese animation are in many ways dependent upon Japan not just for material commodities, but for stories. They are, in other words, dependent upon Japanese culture itself. One might say the American fan has a kind of textual dependence on Japanese culture, the only country which has the power to give him what he wants—a good story. And often, these stories are critical of the fan's national culture as well as threatening to the fan's sense of his own (masculine) power.

American fans of Japanese animation might be said to engage, consciously or unconsciously, in an imperialist relationship where Japan is dominant. Granted, it is a long way from influencing Americans' imaginations through popular culture to controlling American national interests outright. But I would note that *anime* is growing in popularity just as Japanese systems of business management and Japanese corporations are replacing American ones all over the United States. Furthermore, the Japanese themselves are quite comfortable understanding America as a possible colony of Japan. In the Japanese bestselling

manga entitled *Japan, Inc.,* Shotaro Ishinomori has drawn and written a story about a Japanese automobile manufacturer to accompany economics lessons based on *Zeminaru Nihon keizai nyumon*, an introductory economics text put out by the prestigious *Nihon Keizai shimbun* (the Japanese equivalent of the *Wall Street Journal*). This *manga* at one point asserts:

> Half of all US exports to Japan are foodstuffs and raw materials; the US imports mainly machinery and vehicle parts from Japan. This pattern is typical of trade between developing and advanced nations—with the US playing the part of the developing nation.[20]

Here we see the combination of an animated story (in fact, *anime* are often based on *manga*) with an explicit lesson about American economic subordination to Japan.

Bearing this in mind, I want to return briefly to the popularity of *anime* romantic comedies, which American fans find so potent because they are based upon gender roles Americans associate with the 1950s and 60s. This period of time, the postwar period, was also when America exerted its greatest influence over Japan. In fact, this is when American troops occupied Japan. In other words, American nostalgia for previous forms of gender relations in America is linked to nostalgia for earlier versions of imperialist relationships as well. Romantic comedy *anime* remind Americans of a time when the Japanese were firmly under American control. It is interesting to note that by 1963–64, American TV series running on Japanese television reached their peak saturation at fifty-four shows.[21] Hence, American control over Japan consisted of a combination of military and cultural imperialism. When fans nostalgically recollect "the old days" of rigid gender roles and passionate romance, they may also be recollecting the days when America occupied the dominant position in an imperialist relationship with Japan. Ultimately, it would seem that Japanese *anime* translate so well into American contexts because both nations have produced cultures dedicated to imperialism.

Throughout this analysis I have been referring to "culture," and how it generates relationships between individuals and nations. One way culture does this is through ideology, which Louis Althusser has described as the "unity of the real relation and the imaginary relation between [people] and their real conditions of existence."[22] In other words, ideology is one way that people make reality change to suit their imaginations. Let me close with a final example of the way Japanese animation works as a form of ideology specifically aimed at influencing a Western audience. *Anime* feature multiracial casts of characters, many—if not most—of whom are clearly Western. Often lead characters, especially women, have blonde hair and big blue eyes. Some *anime*, such as *Riding Bean*, take place in America—although Bean himself is supposed to be a combination of all the "best races" in the world (what this means is unclear). *Bubblegum Crisis*, with its team of Asian and Caucasian women, takes place in "Mega-Tokyo," a city of the future[23] populated by people of all races in what appear to be equal numbers (unlike contemporary Tokyo). What these *anime* act out is a fantasy in which people of all races and Japanese people are interchangeable. They are imaginary versions of East-West relations which might exist someday, but do not exist yet. While this kind of ideology might seem satisfying and "right" to Americans raised in a multiculture, we must also remember that the Japanese are not multicultural. The ideological implications of these representations are more complex than something like "racial harmony." This multicultural fantasy takes place largely in Japan, and all the races are speaking and being Japanese. What these *anime* suggest is that a very American-looking multiculture is in fact Japanese. And it also suggests that the Japanese are quite aware that part of their target audience for this *anime* is outside Japan, in multicultural America. In a way, these *anime* want to imply that Americans are Japanese. If Americans are already Japanese, then it should be no surprise to any American that Japan, economically speaking, already owns a large portion of the United States.

However, I would not want to end here, without acknowledging that there are implications to the ideology of *anime* which go beyond national interests. In fact, the production and consumption of *anime* within Japan are dramatized in *Otaku no video*, the partly-fictionalized *anime* story of Gainax corporation, a huge *anime* producer in Japan. *Otaku no video* is the tale of two college student *otaku* who form a lucrative company which manufactures "garage kits" (a form of model) related to *anime*. Often, these characters—based on Gainax's employees—are drawn as zany superheroes who call themselves *otakings* and fly. Interspersed throughout this story are live-action "interviews" with Japanese *otaku*, supplemented with fake statistics and graphs about *otaku* culture in Japan. The *otaku* are all "nerds," or people who have no social life. They have office jobs. Often they are supposed to appear slightly crazy, obsessed as they are

with taping every new animated show on TV, or dressing up like a favorite *anime* character. One "statistic," which gets elaborated upon in many interviews, claims that 100% of *otaku* are virgins. The young men who form a company to manufacture *otaku* products are animated superheroes (rather than virginal, office worker nerds) precisely because they are producers and not consumers. The Japanese *otaku* consumers here are just as feminized and disempowered as I postulate American *otaku* fear they might be. In other words, the relationship of textual dependency is not necessarily one of colonizing country to colonized country. It is also the relationship of one class to another: wealthy capitalists to lower middle-class consumers.

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Notes

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1. See Annalee Newitz, "*Anime Otaku*: Japanese Animation Fans Outside Japan," *Bad Subjects,* April 1994, pp. 13-20, for more information on the composition and history of Japanese animation fan culture in the United States. In that article, I discuss the results of a survey I conducted among fans at a local fan club and fans on an Internet newsgroup, rec.arts.anime. I surveyed 100 (mostly American, with about 10% European) fans. Based on information I gathered from officers of a local UC Berkeley campus fan club (Cal Animage, Alpha Chapter), interest in Japanese animation among Americans has grown exponentially in the past 6 years. Cal Animage began as a club 7 years ago with about 20 members. In 1995, their membership had reached 300 officially, and their free weekly screenings of *anime* from members' private collections and the club's video library generally attract over 400 people, only some of whom are official fan club members.
2. See, for example, John Fiske's *Reading the Popular* (Cambridge: Unwin Hyman, 1989) and Constance Penley's work on K/S fan culture, "Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Study of Popular Culture," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, et al. (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 479–500. Although American fans of Japanese animation who subtitle *anime* are not utterly changing the product or generating new narratives, they are certainly altering the way these narratives are consumed—particularly because fan-subtitled *anime* become "priceless" in the sense that they are not supposed to be sold, only traded or shown in the context of fan clubs.
3. Figures taken from Bruce Stonach, "Japanese Television," in *The Handbook of Japanese Popular Culture*, ed. Richard Gid Powers and Hidetoshi Kato (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. 144.
4. In a typical *anime* fan club on the UC Berkeley campus, female membership hovers around 14%. When I surveyed fans over the Internet, my respondents were also roughly 14% female. There are no statistics available on fans in Japan, but certainly stereotypical *otaku* are male in the *anime* themselves. I would add, however, that in the *manga* (comic book) fan culture, there are many *manga* aimed specifically at women and girls. The vast majority of fans (roughly 90%) are between the ages of 15 and 25. Racial composition of fans is highly mixed, with nearly equal proportions European-American and Asian-American; about 10% of fans I surveyed were from other racial or ethnic backgrounds.
5. For a complete discussion of the romance as "women's genre," see Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance* (New York: Routledge, 1982), in which she explains how American mass-produced romance novels cater to a specifically female demographic by soliciting female anxieties and desire. Many of the romantic comedy *anime* share more with the romance genre than with comedy—particularly the soap opera-style romantic comedies.
6. For an excellent analysis of the problems applying Western (feminist) ideas about gender and sexuality to Japanese *manga* culture, see Anne Allison, *A Male Gaze in Japanese Children's Cartoons, or Are Naked Female Bodies Always Sexual?* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, Asian/Pacific Studies Institute, 1993). In Allison's brilliant discussion of masculinity, business relationships, and Japanese children's cartoons in contemporary Japan, she argues that, for Japanese audiences, naked women are not necessarily sexual in the ways I will be arguing they are for Western audiences. Thus it is plausible to say that Japanese men, watching these *anime*, would not understand their gendered and sexual content in the way American men might.
7. I would add that Kyousuke's status as a magical boy also places him in a passive position, particularly when we consider that most of the magical characters in this genre are girls.
8. When I attended the *anime* showings of a local fan club, one young man who was a "regular" used to come occasionally dressed up as Ranma-chan (the female Ranma). His presence clearly alarmed a number of the male fans, and his open identification with this gender-ambiguous character was a source of amusement and panic. One fan said to me openly, when I interviewed him, "That Ranma guy [the fan in Ranma drag] is really weird. We're not all like that."
9. Even in explicitly pornographic *anime*, sometimes sexuality is represented in visual code. For a discussion of how this works, see Sandra Buckley, "'Penguin in Bondage': A Graphic Tale of Japanese Comic Books," in *Technoculture*, ed. Andrew Ross and Constance Penley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 186-188. Buckley explains that sex acts in *manga* are

sometimes converted into images of various objects which the reader understands to mean, for example, vaginal penetration, beatings, sucking, etc.

10. Later made into a low-budget U.S./Japanese-produced science-fiction live-action movie called *The Guyver* (1992), which stars Mark Hamill.
11. In Hiroshi Wagatsuma, "The Social Perception of Skin Color in Japan," in *Modern Japan*, ed. Irwin Scheiner (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1974), the author writes that the Japanese still tend to view whites—and especially blacks—as inferior races based on their skin quality or color. While the Japanese greatly admire white skin, Caucasian skin is sometimes derided as "transparent" rather than "white," or somehow more blemished and wrinkled than Japanese skin. Dark skin is largely undesirable, and indicates animality—hence the Japanese distaste for black or dark-skinned people. The children of mixed marriages are viewed critically, and certain combinations of features in mixed-race children are considered quite abhorrent.
12. When Pai meets Yakomo he is dressed as a woman so he can work as a hostess. In other words, the alliance between separate species also disrupts gender roles.
13. Frederik L. Schodt, *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (New York: Kodansha America, 1983), pp. 38-60.
14. Indeed, many fans I surveyed described their enjoyment of *anime* as stemming from its lack of attention to political correctness. One wrote that he enjoyed *anime* precisely because it is made by "a culture not utterly poisoned by political correctness."
15. For a more complete discussion of how this structure of disavowal works, see Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 9–34. Jameson argues that it is possible for a mass cultural text to work simultaneously as a critique and reinscription of a given ideology.
16. A detailed story about the possibility that Disney animators were influenced by Tezuka's work appeared in Charles Burress, "Disney—'Lion' is Original," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 14 July 1994: D1. Animators interviewed for the article acknowledged that they might have been thinking of *Simba* when they designed *The Lion King*. Both narratives feature young lions whose fathers are killed by jealous brothers (named Claw in *Simba*, and Scar in *Lion King*). Both also feature hyenas as the "bad guys" and scenes in which their heroes see giant images of their fathers in the sky, urging them to take back their kingdoms.
17. Jeremy Tunstall, *The Media Are American: American Media in the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977) 39, pp. 160–163.
18. See, for example, Chandra Mahanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). While I have reduced the theses of this diverse branch of feminism in my account here, certainly one of the underlying principles of this avenue of inquiry is that there is a significant relationship between women and the status of "the colonized." Suffice to say that this relationship is problematic, and not always uniform in all its manifestations.

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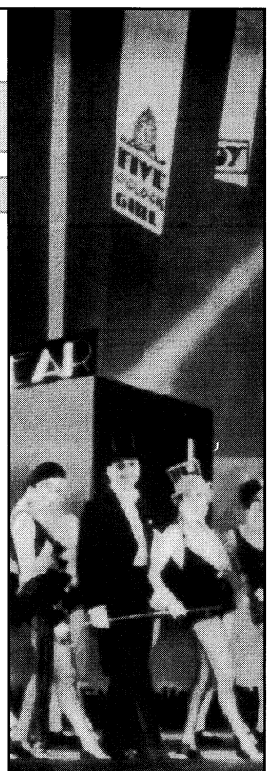

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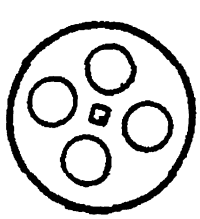

19. Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 121.
20. Shotaro Ishinomori, *Japan, Inc.,* trans. Betsey Scheiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 10.
21. Stronach, p. 138.
22. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 127-186.
23. *Mega Tokyo* is, by the way, quite self-consciously modeled on LA as portrayed in Ridley Scott's movie *Blade Runner* (1982). The main character in *Bubblegum Crisis* is named Priss, and heads a rock band called "Priss and the Replicants." Priss is also the name of one of the synthesized humans (called Replicants) in *Blade Runner*, played by Darryl Hannah.

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Farewell My Concubine: History, Melodrama, and Ideology in Contemporary Pan-Chinese Cinema

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Leslie Cheung, Zhang Fengyi, and Gong-li in *Farewell My Concubine* (above); director Chen Kaige (opposite)

Chinese directors Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou are "in." Europeans have honored them with prestigious prizes while in the United States critics and scholars have responded with voluminous commentary, over a hundred articles in the past two years alone. Most critics acknowledge these two talented directors as superbly refined representatives of Chinese cinema. Chen's latest piece, *Farewell My Concubine*, was crowned with the Palme d'Or in the 1993 Cannes Film Festival. The film was also a hot candidate for the Best Foreign Language Film Award in the 1993 Oscar ceremony but surprisingly failed to win the prize.[1] Similar to events around other recent films such as *Judou* and *Raise the Red Lantern,* the Mainland government's repeated banning and later screening of *Concubine* stirred further attention to and celebration of the film.

Jenny Kwok Wah Lau

Farewell My Concubine

History, Melodrama, and Ideology in Contemporary Pan-Chinese Cinema

Judging from the general response in the West, *Concubine* is considered Chen's masterpiece. In fact, it seems that a trend of acceptance of Chen's films, where criticism lapses into a celebration of excellent art, is well on its way. I, however, view Chen's works with mixed feelings; *Concubine* may well be the decisive film of his career but for reasons that are beyond artistic considerations.

With the release of *Concubine* the moment has come to reassess the achievement of Chen so far, to sort out his strengths and weaknesses and to suggest how his works might properly be read. To tackle these questions one must put *Concubine* in a larger context, that of several significant film movements occurring within contemporary Pan-Chinese Cinema, which shaped the conception of the production, distribution, and the exhibition of the film itself.[2] In the rest of this essay I will delineate the different currents, namely the heated intellectual debate concerning film theory and practice that took place in Mainland China during the eighties, the commercialization of the Mainland Chinese cinema which ran parallel to this debate, the commercial takeover of the Mainland and Taiwan screens by Hong Kong cinema during the same period, and the Hong Kong-Taiwan commercial alliance that capitalized on exporting Chinese "art" cinema in the nineties. Having situated *Concubine* at the crossroad of national and international production, I will argue that symbolic productions such as film can be viewed as a site of negotiation for different cultural traditions, and that the reading of *Concubine* necessitates a consideration of both Western and Chinese conventions of symbolic production and interpretation.

Ideology and Form

In early 1985, a small team representing the Ninth Hong Kong International Film Festival discovered the film *Yellow Earth* in Beijing and persuaded the authorities, who at that time considered the film a relatively insignificant "experimental" production, to permit its screening in the Film Festival—and the face of Mainland Chinese cinema changed forever.[3] During the ensuing decade the Western world came to be awed by a creative and artistic cinema that was not easily evaluated through European critical norms. Curiously, while the rest of the world began to identify China (Mainland and Taiwan) as one of the major "art" film producers, in the Mainland itself, almost simultaneously with the international recognition of *Yellow Earth*, a fierce debate raged pitting "experimental" film versus "entertainment" film. But the continuous outpouring of "art" films from Mainland China rendered this struggle invisible outside of the Mainland.

The re-introduction of entertainment films in the Mainland is a consequence of several forces, but most significantly the 1979 economic restructuring into a socialist market economy. For almost the first time since 1949, box-office returns, or the popularity of a film, became an open concern for all studios. This shift in economic practice was not without serious consequence. To take entertainment as a major function of a film posits an ideological challenge to the traditional socialist requirement of cinema—that a film must be first and foremost didactic.

The debate on entertainment film resulted in some important film conferences being held in the mid and late 1980s which involved theorists, film-makers, and critics.[4] From their discussions, various lines of thought can be traced. First, most film-makers and theorists agreed that entertainment films are products of a market economy and that many of the current entertainment films made in the Mainland are of low quality. From this point on opinions diverged into two major camps. One camp believed that, unlike "experimental" film, which serves only a minority of intellectuals, entertainment film is oriented towards the mass and hence is more in tune with the socialist ideal of mass appeal. Entertainment films constitute a "genre" that facilitates a "healthy catharsis of emotion (desire)" and should be encouraged. Furthermore, some film-maker/theorists, such as Shao Mujun and Hao Dazheng, held that classical Hollywood cinema, due to its immense success in the past, could serve as a model for the structure and the aesthetics of entertainment film in China.[5]

Another camp, however, maintained that recent entertainment films are ideologically problematic. As a product of capitalism, such films prioritize the individual's (versus collective) desire and are an expression of bourgeois individualism. Entertainment film in the Mainland should not follow the Hollywood tradition of catharsis but should adhere to the Chinese tradition of "moral elevation and emotional purification."[6]

Throughout the eighties the spirit of discussion was liberal and dialogical. Although no one can construct a perfect formula for attractive entertainment films, most critics agreed that the "ideal" entertainment film should satisfy the principal of *yia xu kuo xian* (appreciation from both the simple and the refined audience). After the 1989 Tienanmen Square incident, however, hardliners within the second group denounced the market (audience) base of entertainment film and re-instated the central role of ideological didacticism, *zhu xuan ying pian* (film should follow mainstream ideology).

While the theorists were attempting to define a direction for the Mainland cinema, some film-makers, influenced by Hong Kong entertainment films, were already testing the potential of the "Hollywood" form.[7] By 1988, the year which Mainland theorist Ni Zhen has marked as the end of the Fifth Generation New Wave, Mainland Chinese cinema was totally flooded with commercial entertainment films. Even the celebrated art film director Zhang Yimou tried his hand at a Hollywood style thriller titled *Code Name Cougar* (1989), starring the now renowned movie star Gong-li. The film was a miserable failure.

Another experience of "Hollywood" style production for Zhang occurred in the film *A Terra Cotta Warrior* (1990), in which he played the protagonist. It was a big-budget film directed by Hong Kong's first line director Cheng Siu Tong. Although the film was a commercial success Zhang was not too impressed by the process. In later interviews he courteously commented that the Hong Kong way was not his style. In his following films, *Judou* and *Raise the Red Lantern,* we see Zhang revert to his former poetic approach (that of *Yellow Earth* , on which he was the cinematographer, and *Red Sorghum*).

Even though almost all of the Fifth Generation films made before 1988 were intellectually driven and

yielded low box-office returns, Zhang, as a latecomer in the director group, had no intention of making films for a small audience. Even though the Hollywood form did not attract him he was dedicated to making films that could reach the Chinese mass.[8] While Western critics may classify Zhang as an art-film director (which in the Western sense almost always means making films for a small or specialized audience, domestic or foreign) with a refined Chinese style, critical and formalistic, his films, unlike so-called art films, are immensely popular in and outside of Mainland China. Even with his recent stylistic change from symbolism to realism, as seen in *The Story of Qiu Ju*, the fundamental concern for making a popular film has not diminished. It seems that in Zhang's films there is no oppositional dichotomy in the art between intellectual and mass appeal. Indeed, with Zhang, entertainment/popular films, whether intentionally or not, usually turn into powerful subversive tools, critical towards "mainstream (official) ideology."[9] Yet, the popularity of his films renders them important to the State in economic terms. The evidence now shows that the government was forced to exhibit Zhang's films despite their radical nature.[10]

While Zhang has chosen to avoid the Hollywood form and experiment with different cinematic strategies to create a popular cinema in the Chinese style, Chen Kaige has taken a different route. Before directing *Concubine,* Chen had not made a film that was nearly as popular in China as Zhang's, and none of his first four films won any major international awards. *Yellow Earth*, the landmark film of the Fifth Generation New Wave and well known in the West, generated a great deal of admiration. *The Big Parade*, which was stylistically similar to *Yellow Earth*, had a strong cinematographic input from Zhang Yimou and *Life On a String* was an unsuccessful mix of Fifth Generation symbolism and Western experimental style. None of these films carried much mass appeal. It is fair to say that before *Concubine,* Chen had not found a popular form that would communicate with a broad audience.

In an interview after *Concubine* he indicated that he considered his first four films to be "personal, direct, and primitive." They were merely preparatory for his future films (such as *Concubine*) which "will involve the consideration of the audience and commercialism."[11] Indeed, commercialism is a major concern for *Concubine* from both the producer's and the director's side, the former being interested in the business potential and the latter in popular recognition.

The Hong Kong/ Mainland Alliance

Before one can proceed further in contextualizing *Concubine* one has to understand the broader picture, particularly how the Hong Kong motion picture empire has continued to encroach into the Mainland market throughout the 1980s and finally, despite the disruptions brought about by the Tienanmen Square incident in 1989, has become the financial base for major Mainland art films.

The role of Hong Kong cinema in building and reinforcing the entertainment film business in Mainland China can never be over-emphasized. In the early 1980s, soon after China opened her door to the rest of the world, Hong Kong film-makers started to move north in search of new historical and scenic resources which they utilized in films such as *Boat People*, *Home Coming*, *Romance of Book and Sword*, and *The Shaolin* series (a kung-fu series). Meanwhile some Hong Kong films, TV programs, and popular songs were also imported into the Mainland, many of which gained immediate popularity. Along with these material imports from Hong Kong came the notion of "contemporary entertainment/commercial/popular mass media," which was relatively new to China at that point. By the mid-1980s many of the highly popular films in the Mainland were from Hong Kong, starring such Hong Kong icons as Chow Yun-fatt, who is still adored by the Mainland audience.[12]

Throughout this same period, the Mainland film industry was faced with a precipitous decline in the movie audience due to the appearance of new forms of entertainment such as TV and video. The industry soon realized that without some expertise in commercialism, without the high-tech support or the cinematic skill especially evident in action films, and without the immense financial backing that Hong Kong had, it was not possible to compete with Hong Kong films. For the sake of survival, a policy of co-production was adopted, in which the Mainland provided artists, facilities, and minimal production fees, thus reducing financial risks on the part of China. Throughout the mid- to late 1980s there were about ten to twenty co-productions with Hong Kong every year. More significantly these co-productions usually turned out to be major financial successes for the Mainland, for example *Shanghai Beach*, *Shaolin Temple*, *A Man at Forty*, and *New Dragon Gate Inn*.

The two male leads of *Concubine* dressed for their Beijing Opera performance

In addition to the vast geographical and historical resources that China has to offer, co-production is important for the Hong Kong film industry for other reasons. First, co-production with the Mainland almost guarantees distribution and exhibition in the huge market of China. Second, because of the upcoming transition of 1997, a significant number of media talents have migrated overseas, resulting in a continuous weakening in the supply of personnel. Mainland China, with her state-supported film training program, can provide the extra hands that Hong Kong needs.

While the Hong Kong entertainment films captivated the audience of socialist China they also took control of the Taiwan market. This domination was caused by several factors. Following the decline of mandarin *Kung-fu* and *wu-xia* films in the late 1970s, the Taiwan film industry came to a halt. Production dropped from about 200 films per year to 50–80 films in the 1980s. This was barely enough to feed the demands of the theaters, which needed about 100–150 films a year. In the midst of this disintegration a small number of young local film-makers, encouraged by the Hong Kong New Wave directors, tested out the waters. The result was the birth of the now well-known Taiwan New Wave (1981–85), which generated such world-class directors as Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward Young. Between 1981 and 1983, Taiwan was able to recapture some of her own audience with the New Wave films. For example, in 1983 eleven New Wave films were made out of which seven made a substantial profit.[13] But on the larger commercial front Hong Kong films, as early as the mid-1980s, completely dominated the Taiwan market with such films as *Aces Go Places*, *Project A*, *Long Arms of the Law*, and *Mr. Vampire*.

Political changes in the 1980s in Taiwan did not always help that country's film industry either. In 1986 Taiwan lifted its quota for the import of foreign films.

Hong Kong films were then able to compete directly for the Taiwan market. By December, 1987 six out of the seven major theater chains in Taiwan were showing Hong Kong films. Just as in the Mainland, political interference, inexperience in contemporary marketing techniques, and inadequate high-tech support all contributed to the failure of Taiwan films in her own market. Consequently, co-production with Hong Kong became a way out for such major studios as the Central Motion Picture Corporation. Even Edward Young, a leading figure in the Taiwan New Wave, tried at one point to work with Hong Kong.

Another significant political change in Taiwan occurred in 1987, when the government finally lifted 50 years of rule by martial law. This meant that basic citizens' rights such as freedom of political association, freedom of publication, and the freedom to travel (e.g., visits to the Mainland) were re-instated. Together with these new liberties came a freeing-up of the foreign-exchange market. All of these elements were essential for facilitating the investment of Taiwan money in "foreign" (first Hong Kong and later Mainland China) film productions. By the same year two of the major investors, Tomson (the company that produced *Concubine*) and Hung Tai, expanded their investments in Hong Kong, forming a powerful, Taiwan-financed, Hong Kong-based business alliance.

At the same time that the Mainland was making Hong Kong/Hollywood style entertainment films for profit, Taiwan began to see the market potential of the Chinese art films. In 1988, Taiwan New Wave director Hou Hsiao-hsien won the First Prize in the Venice Film Festival for his film *City of Sadness*.[14] This first major international recognition of a Chinese film created intense pride and curiosity among the Chinese audiences. Even though the film was highly sophisticated in its cinematic language and was well over three hours long, it nevertheless resulted in a tremendous success at the box office in Taiwan. For investors this was an indication of the strong market potential for art films.

Ever since then almost all major art films, such as *Raise the Red Lantern*, *Story of Qiu Ju*, *To Live*, *The Puppet Master*, and others from Taiwan or the Mainland that have had the potential of winning international awards, have attracted sponsorship from the Hong Kong/Taiwan alliance. *Concubine* was one of these recent endeavors. The Oscar nomination of *Concubine* was very important in boosting its box-office success, especially in the Mainland and Taiwan. (Hong Kong audiences are not as keen about the Oscars.)

Because of the government regulations in Taiwan, which restricted the screening of films shot in the Mainland of films in which Mainland artists had a substantial participation, the Taiwan–China co-production needed Hong Kong as a middleperson. While Taiwan put out the money and the Mainland contributed its artists, Hong Kong used its experience in marketing and its neutral status both for entrance to international competitions and for screenings in Taiwan. Thus the Taiwan–Hong Kong–Mainland China triangle formed a perfect team to work around the bureaucracy and the political taboos of all three societies.[15]

Concubine is one of the products of this new coalition. Being aware of the fact that the Hong Kong audience is not too attracted by melodrama, one of the film's marketing strategies is to use Leslie Chang, the local pop music superstar whose suspected homosexuality has titillated fans for some time, as a selling point for the Chinese audience.[16] On the other hand, Gong-li, an international superstar, is attractive to Western audiences.

In the film *Concubine*, Chen has utilized the star system and the melodramatic epic genre. The classical structure of melodrama and the directorial ability of Chen work side by side with the Hong Kong style of marketing. Even though some Cannes critics complained about a "sell out" of Chen's former style,[17] Chen consciously made an effort to popularize his work.

Reading *Concubine* at the National/Cultural Conjuncture

Given the context of the film's popularization via the traditional Hollywood form, my reading of *Concubine* will not be a dissection of the text so as to evaluate its artistic quality or to reconstruct its so called "cultural/national meaning." The idea of the national as a combination of cultural aspirations and state limitation is simply not sufficient for the reading of this particular film. This brings to mind the globalists' questioning or even denial of the relevance of the notion of nationhood as a viable category in contemporary cultural studies. Many globalists believe that due to the combined results of the First World's economic expansion and recent technological advances (such as the Internet, etc.) an uncontrollable surge of information and entertainment into the Second and Third Worlds renders the notion of cultural boundaries, a major element in the definition of

nationhood, obsolete. In other words, the Third World is so infiltrated with First World images and narratives that it is not possible to identify a Third World "national" symbolic product anymore.

I contend, however, that this argument, which is based on the Western European technological and cultural connection with the U.S., has over-simplified the process of cultural production and underestimated the kind of cultural screening (in Gramsci's sense) that indigenous populations undertake in expressing their own experience. This is particularly true in the case of China, which, in addition to her complicated process of cultural production, is confined by its technological condition. The availability of high-tech devices to the public for the reception of foreign cultural products such as video, the Internet, etc., is nowhere comparable to Western Europe. The cultural boundary established between China and the rest of the world through the barriers of language as well as technology is still significantly strong. Thus, instead of erasing the notion of national boundaries I believe that the cultural/national is a persistent presence not only for political reasons but also for the inevitable existence of the frames of reference, which even if mixed and difficult to discern at times, nevertheless distinguish one culture from another.

The Althusserian idea of historical conjuncture is useful here. A historical conjuncture is a moment in the process of social transition when contradictory forces working within the society are in a state of balance. That is, there is no single force which can play an over-determining role in directing the development of history. I suggest that this idea of conjuncture can be extended to the cultural arena of Chinese cinema, which at this point is undergoing a tension in redefining nationalization and internationalization. For that reason, in an investigation of a transnational media product such as *Concubine*, which attempts to reach both the domestic (Pan-Chinese) and the international audience, it is necessary to consult, rather than conceal, the different tropes, both cultural and cross-cultural, that constitute its making and its reading(s). By re-scanning the film for what is present and absent I attempt to discover how the economic-cultural context of the film expands and limits what can be said and what remains unsaid, thus illuminating our understanding of a major international work.

Critics generally have praised *Concubine* as a visually interesting, stylized, and frequently beautiful film. As a commercial product it utilizes Beijing Opera and homosexuality as two of its selling points, making it attractive both to Chinese and Western audiences for reasons of nostalgia and curiosity. With Beijing Opera in the foreground, the film raises issues concerning homosexuality, thus engaging in an unusual public negotiation of the taboo question of sexuality in Chinese society. Even though homosexuality is not generally accepted among Chinese it is common knowledge that homosexual practices did take place in Beijing Opera troupes, rendering its discussion (within *Concubine*) more acceptable. Given the strong market potential of these basic ingredients the challenge to the director is whether or not he is able to: 1) mobilize the inherent drama associated with Beijing Opera, namely its acrobatic vitality, color, sense of history, and even nationalism, to create a powerful story for an international audience without appearing to be orientalist, and 2) to make use of this unusual opportunity to reflect on Chinese sexuality in general and/or homosexuality in particular.

Beijing Opera

Three major elements intertwine and structure the film—Beijing Opera, a love story, and a series of historical events occurring in modern China. The film is not a documentary account of Beijing Opera. It is a love story of three people (Dieyi, Xiaolou, and Juixian) that spans thirty years during the early 1900s in China. But Beijing Opera is the major experience shared by the characters and it functions as the agent that shapes their relationship. Structurally speaking, Beijing Opera is not simply the backdrop for a romantic drama. Rather, it is the object of pursuit (or rejection) of the protagonists and has a history and a "character" of its own. The very attraction/repulsion of this particular "character" powerfully determines the course of events in the film. Dieyi's (and the Japanese) attraction to art, Xiaolou's ambivalence, Juixian's disinterest, and the communists' rebellion against art are the precipitating forces of the most decisive episodes.

As definitive as these relationships should be, the film, which focuses on the more universal narrative of romance, has projected a rather one-dimensional treatment of Beijing Opera and its love/hate exchanges with its characters. Although in the film Dieyi is a nationally acclaimed artist, one does not see how he interacts with his art. Nor does the film make any attempt to dig deeply into the specific "character" of the art. Rather, the first part of the film is an excessive display of torture and the second part a detached depiction of what are supposedly glamorous performances. It is true that in the past the training of opera

actors was notoriously harsh or even abusive. But since the protagonist is willing to die for his art one would expect to see where the art intermingles with life.

By suppressing the meaning of the art to the artist himself the film also denies its audience the appreciation of the depth of affection that the older generation of Beijing Chinese felt for this popular art. Only the surface of Beijing Opera, the colorful and the exotic, is shown, with the display of sex, drugs, and violence becoming an uncritical exhibition of "oriental savageness."[18] At best, it only reflects a peculiar disinterest in or complaint about this particular national heritage. (Although there is nothing wrong in not subscribing to one's traditional art.)

On the other hand, according to a biographical account of Mei Lanfang,[19] the twentieth-century master of Beijing Opera female impersonation to whom the film's protagonist Dieyi is an obvious parallel,[20] Beijing Opera was an art that he existentially embodied. It was an art that involved not only memorization and imitation but also the creative imagination and innovation of the individual artist. For example, one of Mei's contributions to the stage was to abolish the conventional separation of the four female roles in traditional Beijing Opera and to create a new, lively, multi-female model. He wrote numerous scripts for this kind of new opera and performed in his own works.

Although Dieyi's total identification with his female role is the major cause of the drama in the film, in general, the transvestite role in Beijing Opera does not copy the woman but signifies her. In this sense, Mei believes it is possible for an impersonator to be more "feminine" than a female. For femininity in Beijing Opera is a translation, not necessarily a transgression. Mei was known for his obsession with perfecting even minor details of this system of signification, such as his famous *lanhua shou* (orchid's hand), a hand gesture that expresses the nuanced differences of the delicate emotions of a female. Mei was learned in other arts such as painting, dancing, and poetry. At one point, he was a student of one of the greatest Chinese painters, Qi Baishi. In short, Mei was a perfectionist who immersed himself in his art and his dedication could be seen in the details of his daily life.

Despite the lack of involvement with the art, the film does present Beijing Opera as a colorful oriental spectacle, however superficially it may do so. It seems that a sign of an uneasy marriage of the Mainland Fifth Generation critical spirit with the capitalist commercial demand of non-radicality has appeared here. This indecisiveness is too afraid to critique (the Chinese tradition) and too eager to display for the sake of pleasing the Other's curious gaze.

The Love Story

The story is a triangular relationship. Two boys who grow up in a torturous Beijing Opera training house turn out to be celebrated partners on stage and intimate friends offstage. As one (Shitou, later stage named Xiaolou) is trained to play the hero and the other (Douzi, later stage named Dieyi) his lover, the latter falls in love with his friend. When Xiaolou marries the prostitute Juixian (played by Gong-li) a life-long emotional struggle among the three begins. Soon their lives are rocked by tumultuous political waves, from the war of resistance against Japan to the Cultural Revolution. In the end Dieyi and Juixian commit suicide, leaving behind a bewildered Xiaolou.

To cut through the complexity of the plot one can look at the story as an interplay of several major binaries: art (dream/unreality) versus life (material/reality), loyalty versus betrayal, female versus male. Although the director himself takes the loyalty/betrayal theme as central to the film, the heavy overtone of eroticism, love, and sexuality renders these notions just as significant.

The Freudian fable here has been recognized by most Western critics.[21] Freudian interpretation of femininity, which defines female as the non-male and the female body as a body with a "genital deficiency" (it lacks the penis), is followed almost in a literal sense. Dieyi's (symbolic) lack is first created by his symbolic castration—signified by the removal of his supernumerary finger in the beginning of the film. Then there is the symbolic rape when Xiaolou forces a smoking pipe (a symbolic penis) into Douzi's mouth after he refuses to play the female role during the initial stage of his opera training. (The process is grotesquely exaggerated with blood.) For the rest of his life, Dieyi's femininity is dependent on the acceptance or refusal of him as a love object of the male (Xiaolou).

By the same token, the "insertion" in sexual intercourse, which is the reciprocal expression of the "lack," is used to highlight Juixian's femininity. A love-making scene, overheard by Dieyi and resulting in Juixian's pregnancy, does not express the emotional attachment of the couple. Rather, it foregrounds a fixation on the genitals in the film's definition of

sexual identity. Both episodes of Dieyi's "demasculinization" function as an account of the construction of a "problematic" female gender in Douzi. A critic protested that these episodes perpetuate the definition of female as "created by pain and deprivation, maintained by substitute satisfactions."[22] While I agree with the comment, I believe that it is the structure of the relationship between the three major characters that has to be examined in order to unveil the patriarchal fantasy embedded in the film.

There are two females, one real (Juixian) and the other unreal (Dieyi). The real female first appears in a brothel, a market of bodies and sex. As the supreme prostitute in the brothel, Juixian is already defined by the institution—woman as the quintessential sex object. Although Juixian does not have the passivity of a traditional woman and actively seeks to be with Xiaolou, her aspiration hardly goes beyond that of being Xiaolou's wife. In her engagement with Xiaolou, when the audience first sees them meet, the shot/reverse shot of them toasting conforms with the cinematic tradition of casting the woman as the bearer of the male's look even when, in this particular episode, she is looking back. The determined look of the latter does not relinquish her position of being the erotic object of the male gaze.

In the rest of the film Juixian actively pursues her man. This is in contrast with many traditional Hollywood melodramas of the fifties in which the female object is much more passive. The image of a sexually aggressive female, epitomized in the stardom of actress Gong-li, is commonly found in Fifth Generation films. It is easy to misunderstand the character to be a sign of women's liberation in China. But if one compares this image with the one projected in the past 30 years in socialist China, the "Gong-Li image" is but an amalgam of the traditional socialist strong woman, who fearlessly pursues her (revolutionary) goal within the pre-socialist feudalistic male fantasy of a female dedicating herself to a single male. The two kinds of "strong woman" in fact represent very little structural difference. The only change between the heroines of the two cinemas is a change of their masters, from the state back to the old patriarchal man.[23]

At the same time the patriarchal definition of femininity, which hardly goes beyond the notion of "the lack," is supplemented by the classical Chinese practice of gender-based social roles. In the process of self-actualization the male is the subject of the enabling process and the center of the sacrifice while the females are the (domineering) enablers and the sacrificed. The real female protects and promotes Xiaolou's material life by actively engaging him in a profit-making business and discouraging him from harmful political confrontations. The unreal female promotes the male's artistic/spiritual/unreal world by insisting the latter do that which the real female opposes. The aggressiveness of both females in enforcing their ideals on the male thus reaches a point of domination which is not uncommon in Chinese cinema. On the surface there is a dichotomy between what the two "females" represent, yet their structural relations to the male are in fact similar. Both are obsessed with promoting the life of the male. Both consider their femininity and therefore their lives incomplete, if not non-existent, without the male. Since both cannot get the male both kill themselves in the end.

The suicide of Dieyi was calculated to be climactic and heroic. Similar to many other *Lie nu*[24] stories of the past in which the woman commits suicide for the unattainable man, because of his death or otherwise, Dieyi's indulgence is sanctified, just as the *Zhen Lie nuzi* (chaste women) were, through her/his death. Interestingly enough, in the original novel, written by a woman, there is no heroic death of any kind. For both characters life simply goes on in banality. It seems that the male fantasy, ideologized through thousands of years of popular Confucianism, still grips the imagination of a contemporary post-socialist artist.[25]

Hong Kong Escapist Suppression and Chinese Centrism

Lilian Lee was a wise choice for a scriptwriter. Although Lee's work is generally not recognized for its depth (as compared to other Hong Kong writers such as Chuang Aui-ling), nevertheless she is one of the most popular novelist/scriptwriters in Hong Kong. The film *Concubine* builds on Lee's original novel, and thus carries both the strengths and the weaknesses of its author.

Lee's novels, such as *The Reincarnation of the Golden Lotus*, and *Rouge* (filmed by leading Second Wave directors Clara Law and Stanley Kwan respectively), are characterized by a strong melo-dramatization of personal experiences placed within intense historical moments of the larger society. As these moments are usually contemporary incidents in China, Lee's stories carry a kind of realism or a sense

Leslie Cheung: the male performer as female spectacle

of imminence. Unfortunately, the weakness of her scripts lies exactly in her characters' superficial relation to history.

In *Concubine* there is not much to show the emotional dynamics of the protagonists when facing significant historical changes. The night that the Japanese enter Beijing is also the night that Dieyi accepts a patron's advances and decides to tell Xiaolou that they will never perform together again. The incident seems to occur suddenly and response from the characters is minimal. Similar incidents such as the Cultural Revolution are also portrayed without a concern for the psychological tension of the characters.

A critic has observed a similar pattern and comments that in "the process of political turmoil we (the audience) lose contact with the characters. . . . Human motives disappear, to be replaced with ideology."[26] But more importantly, Lee's attitude also reflects a Hong Kong mentality of escape from history, or what is commonly known in Hong Kong as "political coldness." Given the colonial status of Hong Kong, not until the 1980s, after the Declaration of the Sino-British Agreement on 1997, did the local Chinese have much say about their society. The result has been an attitude of resignation or suppression. Somehow, a fantasy was generated that, for over a hundred years, history (the ceding of Hong Kong to the British, the Japanese Occupation during World War II, the 1997 return of Hong Kong to China, etc.) was simply thrust upon the Hong Kong Chinese, and the way to handle these impositions was to deny any emotional response and simply seek survival.

Interestingly enough, this attitude of noninterference with history overlaps to a certain extent with director Chen's post–Cultural Revolution mentality, although for a reason totally different from Lee's. The over-politicized environment of the Cultural Revolution, which rendered private personal life impossible and minimized national productivity, has caused the Mainland Chinese to resent the overt interference of politics in daily life. The episode in which Dieyi rescues his friend Xiaolou and ignores the political implication of his performing for the Japanese is the film's

pragmatic rhetorical response to the spirit of the Cultural Revolution, which had called for a life of sacrifice in accord with a pure patriotic ideology.

Some Western critics may be correct to complain about the Mainland government's narrow nationalism in faulting the film's negative portrayal of the Cultural Revolution. Yet, the film's muffled depiction of art and politics as experienced by the Chinese during the War of Resistance Against the Japanese, a point largely unnoticed by Western critics, cannot simply be ignored. In refusing to acknowledge the kind of nationalism that Beijing Opera represents, and hence the implication of sanctifying a hero who performed for the invading Japanese, the film trivializes one of the most horrific wars of resistance that the Chinese have fought against invaders. This total dissociation of politics from daily life is further problematized by the fact that Dieyi clearly parallels the historical actor Mei Lanfang, who in reality did keep his dignity and that of Beijing Opera by refusing to perform for the invading Japanese. In fact, he grew a mustache to let his intentions be known.

Although the mimetic nature of film need not be over-emphasized here, one can still compare how, in the case of Western cinema, (Western) critics have always responded negatively to German artists who worked for Nazi Germany during World War II. The case of Leni Riefenstahl is a good example. Many would be offended if a screen hero ignored the evil of Nazi Germany. However, in the case of *Concubine* the narrative is evasive, since Dieyi is a hero only in an ambiguous way and he performs for the Japanese in order to save a life. Yet, when he comes out of the Japanese camp he expresses no resentment. Instead, he appreciates the Japanese interest in the opera.

Lee and Chen may share a similar perspective on the suppression of history in their characters' lives but their attitudes towards Hong Kong are strikingly different. As a result, the film, as interpreted by Chen, is critically different from Lee's story. The alteration seems small but the implication is significant. In the original novel Dieyi does not commit suicide. Both actors leave Mainland China after the Cultural Revolution and reside in Hong Kong. Xiaolou, who was once the great warrior hero on stage, lives as a tram driver in the city. The novel presents a strong sense of Hong Kong as a concrete reality, a space of new order. Chen chose to change this original ending into a suicide scene. The effect may be more melodramatic, but the meaning is drastically different.

Historically speaking, the Mainland's claim of sovereignty over Hong Kong has always resulted in its denial of the subject position of Hong Kong, her right of self-determination. In *Concubine* the elimination of Hong Kong from the text is only consistent with the Mainland mentality of marginalization. The fact that Hong Kong has the historical significance of being the alternative society for many Chinese during every period of political turmoil occurring on the Mainland in the past century, which the ending of the novel *Concubine* reflects, is totally silenced in the film. As a result of this sabotage of the diegetic space of Hong Kong, the latter is made invisible and nonexistent. This attitude of Mainland centrism is once again *natural* from the impending (colonial) master's point of view but quite problematic from that of the subalterns. No wonder a Hong Kong critic/scholar termed this movie *"Bawang Dianying"* (The Empire's Movie).[27]

The American trade newspaper *Variety* has reported that Chen's *Concubine* indicates that he has "learned to tell a story more comprehensible to Westerners."[28] Without ignoring the condescending tone of such a statement, my concern is not with Chen's Hollywood story structure but with the limitation that Chen has imposed (or been forced to impose) on himself, in his attempt to create a transnational popular text: the issues he chooses to address, the tropes that are instrumental to him, and the aesthetics that he is willing to commit to in the process.

A unique characteristic of the Hong Kong–Taiwan production alliance is that it deliberately capitalizes on the art film and is willing to allow (established) artists to "do their art."[29] Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Zhang Yimou, and others have uncompromisingly taken their opportunities and succeeded. I watch Chen Kaige with expectation and anxiety.

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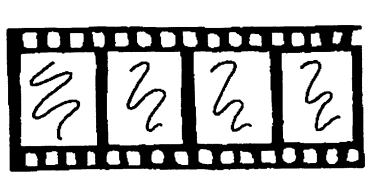
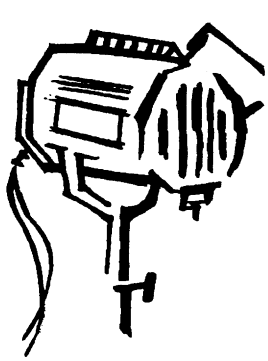


Notes

1. According to the Hong Kong newspaper *South China Morning Post* (March 24, 1994, "Missing Link to an Academy Award"), one reason for the failure of *Concubine* to win the Oscar was because the veteran Hollywood director Billy Wilder, who was on the voting committee for the Oscar, had lobbied actively for his old friend Fernando Trueba, who later indeed took the prize for *Belle Époque*.
2. Pan-Chinese is used to refer to the combined society of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China.
3. In Mainland China "experimental film" is sometimes also referred to as "cultural film," which is similar to the label of "art film" in the West.
4. A translation of some of these discussion can be found in *Film in Contemporary China: Critical Debates, 1979–89*, ed. George Semsel, Chen Xihe, and Xia Hong (New York: Praeger, 1993).
5. Ibid., pp. 121–134.
6. The so-called "Hollywood form" here is used in a broad sense, pointing more to the practice of mass production and commercial calculation.
7. Ni Zhen, "Has the Fifth Generation of Chinese Film Ended?" *China Screen*, no. 1, 1989, pp. 14–15.
8. See a book-length interview of Zhang Yimou, *Red Sorghum and Zhang Yimou*, by Lor (Beijing: China Film Publisher,1988).
9. An example can be found in the reading of the film *Judou* in "*Judou*: A Hermeneutic Reading of Cross-Cultural Cinema" by Jenny Kwok Wah Lau, in *Film Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 2 (Winter 1991–92), pp. 2–10.
10. A retrospective of Zhang's work was held in Mainland China in 1992.
11. See Interview in *Film Biweekly* (Hong Kong) no. 359, (Jan.8-18, 1993), pp. 45–50.
12. Mainland China has its own quality popular films such as *Samsara* and *Trouble Shooters* as well as crude imitations of Hong Kong films.
13. *China Film Year Book 1988* (Beijing: China Film Publisher, 1988), pp. 13–19.
14. As one of the oldest and most prestigious film festivals in Europe, the Venice Film Festival has been instrumental in introducing Asian films to world cinema. *City of Sadness* was the second Asian film that won the prize. The first one was *Rashomon,* by Akira Kurosawa. In 1988, the New York Film Festival World Critics Poll voted Hou one of the three directors who will lead world cinema in the coming decades.
15. By 1992 there were 90 co-produced/assisted feature films made in China, of which 81 were made in association with Hong Kong and Taiwan. See *China Screen*, no.3, 1993, pp. 34–35.
16. See *Fai Piao* (Hong Kong Newspaper), October 22, 1993, p. 23.
17. Mary Corliss, "Cannes '93: Counting Blessings," *Film Comment,* vol. 29, no.4 (July/Aug, 1993), pp. 70–73.
18. To portray Chinese as unclean drug addicts who engage in "perverted" sex is not uncommon in Hollywood's history of film-making. See *Romance and the "Yellow Peril,"* by Gina Marchetti (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
19. Wu Zuguang, Huang Zuolin, and Mee Shaowu, *Peking Opera and Mei Lanfang* (Beijing: New World Press, 1981).
20. Given the historical background, Dieyi as the most popular male female impersonator in Beijing Opera strongly parallels the real life Mei Lanfang, a well-known Beijing Opera artist. Mei in fact wrote the script of *Concubine* (a story based on a recorded historical event that happened about two thousand years ago) and played the concubine himself while his male counterpart, the emperor, was played by a man named Xiaolou. See *Secrets of the Chinese Drama*, by Cecilia S. L. Zung (London: George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1937), pp. 155, 184. The film *Concubine* goes so far as to name the corresponding character who played the emperor with the same name, Xiaolou.
21. I am not suggesting here that Freudian psychology can be applied to interpret Chinese films without modification. But the narrative here parallels Freud's fable quite directly.
22. *China New Digest*, Jan. 30, 1994, p. 125.
23. Notice how Gong-li's role is stereotyped by the Fifth Generation male directors as being either minimally related to or competitive with other women. Her role is different under the female director Huang Shuqin in the film *Soul of a Painter* (1993, Mainland-Taiwan co-production).
24. *Lie nu* is a term describing a woman's sexual loyalty even to the degree of martyrdom. The term was first used in the book *Lie Nu Zhuan* (Biographies of Women), which came out sometime around the first century.
25. The film reflects a sexist view of femininity as well as offering a homophobic explanation of gay sexuality which presumably results from abuse and ends up with drugs, confusion, and perversion.
26. *China News Digest*, Jan.30, 1994, p. 125.
27. Yar See, "Bawang Yu Ji" (The Emperor and the Concubine), and "Bawang Dianying" (The Empire's Movie), *Sing Tao Evening News* (Hong Kong Newspaper), Nov. 11, 1993, and Dec. 1, 1993, respectively.
28. *Variety*, May 24, 1993, p.46.
29. See an interview of Zhang Yimou by Robert Sklar in *Cineaste*, vol. XX, no.1, pp. 28–29.



Reviews

The Man Without a World

Producer/director/screenplay: Eleanor Antin. Cinematographer: Richard Wargo. Editor: Lynn Burnstein. Music: Lee Erwin.

The Man Without a World (1991) is a film of a film made to evoke an absence, as a means to "see" what is no longer there. It is an act on the part of an artist to engage with a past which no longer physically exists except through representations of that world. The film, a 16mm, black-and-white silent feature, was made by Eleanor Antin as a part of her work as a conceptual and performance artist spanning three decades. An integral member of the conceptual art movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Antin has long left the specificity of a single medium and moves easily between different media, including drawing, photography, film, video, performance, and writing. Because of this, Antin's use of a specific medium arises from the issues and ideas she is engaging with (as opposed to a film director who engages all ideas through the discourse of cinema). This nomadic relation to different kinds of media places her in the margins of the discourses around them and perhaps opens areas of investigation unnoticed by artisans whose primary relation to ideas is through their chosen medium. About her work Antin states: "I see time as epoch and genre rather than as an unfolding process" (Levin 107). Her recent work consists of recreating a historical moment and then inserting herself into that moment by taking on a character or a figure from that period who is an amalgam of that particular moment, thereby raising questions which engage contemporary artistic, aesthetic, and philosophical issues. For three weeks in 1980 Antin lived in New York as Eleanora Antinova, the once celebrated but now retired black ballerina of Diaghilev's Ballet Russe. By living this character, darkening her skin color, dressing as Antinova, adopting many of the aristocratic trappings of this persona, and giving public performances and lectures in character, Antin engaged several contemporary issues of representation, identity, and historicity. In the 1977 piece *The Angel of Mercy*, Antin becomes nurse Eleanor Antin, to evoke and comment on the stylistic, social, political, and moral climate of Victorian England. Using 19th-century tableau vivant theatrical styles and early photographic and cinematographic techniques that give the appearance of authentic historical documentation of these periods, Antin places the objectivity of representational artifacts of a historical moment in doubt. Her 19th-century photographs, impressive as they are in their apparent authenticity, are simulations. As Antin writes, "It is not the real thing which suggests the real in art, it is rather the slight disparity, the unexpected even, that will give the appearance of truth" (Levin 113).

Starting from the position that history is more genre or construction than event, in 1991 Antin becomes Yevgeny Antinov the Polish Jewish film director of *The Man Without a World*. As opening titles indicate, *The Man Without a World* is the recently found "lost" film of this forgotten Yiddish film director. As Antinov, Antin has inserted herself into the discourse of creative artifact as history. From this vantage point she can re-image an extinct world by creating a fiction and turning it into a historical artifact in order to explore the Yiddish Cinema and Jewish shtetl life prior to World War II. In this elegant gesture, Antin uses both the events of WW II, a lost era of film history, the extinct culture of the shtetl, and pure fiction to fashion the parts of this "history" which are important to her.

Set in a shtetl in pre-war Poland, the film centers on Zevi, a young man with pretensions to being a poet who yearns for the cosmopolitan artist's life in Warsaw. Inspired by the arrival of a band of traveling Gypsy performers replete with a ballerina (recalling an earlier Antin character), magician, and strongman, Zevi abandons his family and girlfriend to be near them. He starts frequenting a local bar where he writes and recites symbolist poetry, and argues politics and

philosophy with the local "intellectuals," who, like Zevi, have pretensions to being socialists, anarchists and Zionists. The film moves from scenes of general daily shtetl life to scenes in the bar to Zevi's home where we meet his loving girlfriend, his tortured mother, and his sister, who goes crazy as a result of being raped by Polish peasants. Throughout, Zevi is torn between being a "good Jewish boy" and living the responsible life, or going off to Warsaw with the artist Gypsies to live the life of a poet. In the end his mother dies of suffering—"Jewish mother" style. His sister dies after religious fanatics exorcise a *dybbuk* that has possessed her, and finally he agrees to do the right thing and marry his now pregnant girlfriend. At the wedding his wife's rejected suitor crashes the wedding killing several of Zevi's best friends. Zevi, in a fit of rage, kills the suitor, and is forced to leave the shtetl to avoid arrest. The film ends with Zevi going off—without his pregnant wife—with the artist Gypsies to Warsaw as Death follows close behind.

The narrative of the film is closer to an armature to support images and situations which interest Antin, than it is a story which is complex psychologically or in plot development. Rather, like dreams, the narrative is based on condensation—of different stories, myths, characters and situations. Here Antin creates a montage of Jewish cultural traits and archetypes. These come from an amalgam of sources, from mystical Yiddish folk tales to more realistic stories about the difficulties of Jewish life in eastern Europe. Antin was influenced by stories of the great Yiddish writers such as Babel and Singer, by the Yiddish cinema itself as well as other archival material, and received images from her own family history. The film is based on desire and loss by the artist whose own relationship as first-generation Jewish American to this vanished world seems to take precedence in the creation of the narrative over issues of strict historical accuracy. Here Antin has rendered visible through representations of representations a compendium of Yiddish cultural archetypes and stereotypes which Antin—as opposed to Antinov—knows is doomed to oblivion, since she is making the film in the present. This film also comments on the immediate past of European modernist culture, incorporating a kind of social history of the different strains of pre-World War II intellectual, political, and artistic ideas into the narrative, while at the same time incorporating contemporary postmodern notions of appropriation and simulation embodied by Antin's project itself. This is all woven together as a pretext for Antin's real agenda, which is to revive the "lost" Jewish cultural archetypes, e.g., the romantic and lost poet who wants to get out of the small oppressive town; the Gypsy artists, the revolutionists, the Jewish mother; the fair maiden at once committed to and oppressed by her family; the Rabbi, the *dybbuk*, the anti-semitic Polish rapists; and more broadly, the village people, the towns, cities, a culture (art literature, theatre, and cinema), a way of life, a language, all of which were eradicated as they existed before the Second World War. What is left is a memory trace that, as time goes on, becomes more distanced and sentimentalized. The title *The Man Without a World* itself speaks not only to Zevi's alienation from his own culture as a result of his intellectual and artistic aspirations, but also foreshadows the end of both these worlds in the decade to come.

Because Antin's film engages social, cinematic, and art history from several different vantage points, the film becomes an interesting and important attempt to deal with the destruction of pre-war Yiddishkeit culture without the kind of sensationalized fetishizing of the Holocaust—so prevalent in contemporary popular culture—as if it were the only narrative through which to look at eastern European Jewish culture and history. The Holocaust is never once mentioned in *The Man Without a World*, save for the end titles of the film, which speak to the end of this "world" through Jewish deportation out of the region (these titles return the film from fictional text to a historical context validating what we are already thinking about throughout the film). Still, the entire narrative of the film is "backshadowed" by the viewer's knowledge of the events of World War II. The viewer's knowledge of

what happened to the people portrayed in the film works to disarm any critical judgment of the characters, and makes possible a sentimentalized view of this world by encouraging empathy with its impending doom. *The Man Without a World* is a world of ghosts.

The film opens with a figure who comes to be known as Death and who conjures up the world we are about to experience simply by snapping his finger. These are no longer real people who have all the complexity of human beings. Rather they are cultural archetypes and victims with whose ultimate fate we sympathize and, from a vantage point of distance in time, mourn. But this sympathy has its price, because in the end none of the villager's actions has any consequences because of this impending doom, and thus the villagers' humanity is reduced. Antin is more interested in her desires for what this lost world represents to her personally and poetically than in rendering the "archaeologically" correct image of it. Her shtetl is the wellspring of the elements of a secular cultural Judaism that the now assimilated and educated American Jew can still embrace—a world where humanism reigns supreme. It is a world of argument, family, art, politics, and religion. This is a world poised at the intersection between traditional ethnic folk life and modernity, and it has an innocence and purity that is no longer easily questioned because it was destroyed from outside rather than from within. While few of the characters in the film are particularly interesting, and many can even be seen as simply embarrassing Jewish caricatures, especially as portrayed in the non-naturalistic acting style of the silent film, the backshadowed knowledge of their eventual doom disarms a critical view of the way the author portrayed them and transforms what might be seen as embarrassing into sentimentality. Since this world is gone for good, its memory can be used to support any polemic or need. As contemporary societies become more homogenized and ethnic groups assimilate, the negative aspects of the ethnic past begin to recede as sources of embarrassment and anger, and yield to sentimentality and nostalgia. Time and the safety of this assimilation seem to smooth the edges of the "spectacle" of ethnicity; for example, "old world" customs, food, accents, dress, rituals, and social styles, which were once the mark of ignorance and/or backwardness, become the embodiment of one's soul and heart forfeited in the process of assimilation. This phenomenon is particularly true of second- and third-generation immigrants who in the context of a highly assimilated culture are now looking for some connection to their ethnic past with hopes of finding a cultural authenticity in the midst of the contemporary hybrid culture of the U.S. They/we attempt to reach out to a past that in its ephemerality and idealized representations can be appropriated in any way needed. Antin can be seen as engaging in this kind of activity.

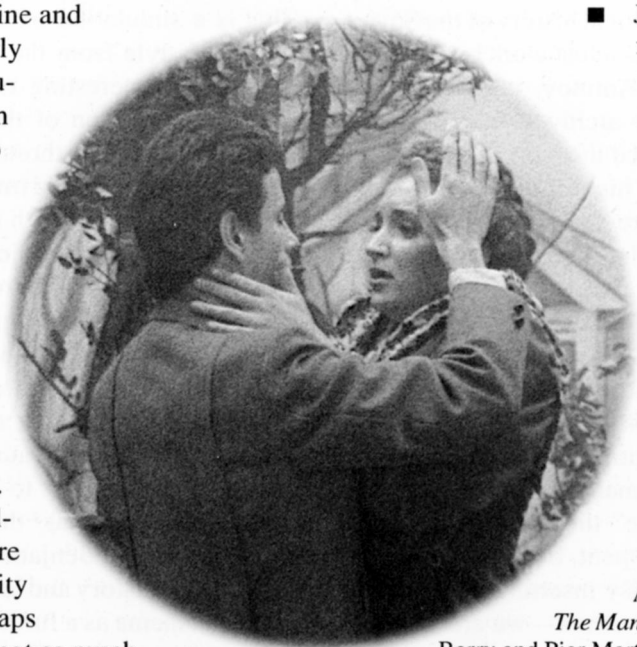
The Man Without a World creates an emotional intensity through the foreshadowing elements in the story. The film is filled with death and loss that carve a path straight to Zevi and the whole village's ultimate doom. The film begins with the embodiment of Death popping into the frame—mystically/cinematically—with a wave of a finger creating the drama and world as if this were a world of the dead. This foreshadows the loss and death that will befall the characters in the film and ultimately the whole culture, making the cataclysm of the "final solution" seem inexorable. Throughout the work we see foreshadows of the "end": the rape of the young woman by the Polish peasants; the takeover of the bakery by a non-Jew, implying that there is a law that has been passed banning Jews from owning bakeries. These are also images from the pogroms that beset these communities, which today we see as a foreshadowing of the Holocaust itself. In the last shot of the film, as the remaining artists leave for Warsaw, they are followed down the road by Death.

By engaging with cinema's history as an opening up of other possibilities for representing a historical moment, perhaps the most interesting aspect of the film is the way that it opens other possibilities for understanding this history. Rather than making a naturalized fictional representation of the lost shtetl world à la Barbra Streisand's movie *Yentl*, Antin has made a fictionalized representation of a film that might have been made representing that world. *The Man Without a World* is a simulation of a silent era Yiddish film. A film of a film as it were. Antin has gone back to a secondary historical moment—a moment in the history of cinema. Antin then places this film in a real historical context. The opening titles (white letters on a black background which move across the screen in a vertical crawl) inscribe the film not only in the history of cinema, but also in the political history of the Soviet Union. We are told that this is a lost work by the great Yiddish director Yevgeny Antinov, which was recently discovered in Soviet archives as a result of *perestroika*. These titles place the film not just as an entertainment, but also as a historical document and artifact of a world and culture destroyed. This is also consistent with popular Holocaust literature, where the fictional story is usually given a historical immediacy and validation through a historically based introduction. The film's opening titles become a fictional factual introduction to frame the fiction. In addition, these titles also work to blur genres. The self-conscious use of the convention of the opening and closing titles, with all the earmarks of the authoritative voice of scholarship, "frame" the experience of the film not only as an entertainment, but also as an educational documentary film. By inserting it into a political history—whether real or not—we are made to understand that in its time, the film we are about to see was simply an entertainment, but because of the forces of history the film is now more than that, it has also become an artifact—a shard from a lost world. This simulated artifact interrogates not only the history of a people and the loss of their culture, but it is also an interrogation of the history of the representation of that culture. As an artistic action, Antin's work raises a myriad of questions and issues having to do with lines between the real and the image and how they become inseparable. We live in a world of representation, where the image has come to have more presence than the object it is representing. This is particularly true of representations of a world—like the shtetlekh—which no longer exist.

How then does one represent a world that no longer exists, a world that cannot be returned to in order to find evidence, ruins, survivors, etc.? How do we know what that world was except through the representations that were made of it? So to make a film of a film that came out of that world, which portrayed that world, is an act of disillusion in the sense that the artist is revealing the source of the representation that is created as opposed to creating an illusion that this is the "real" world. Antin's knowledge of shtetl life does not come from real experience, but rather from copies of copies. This places Antin right in the middle of contemporary postmodern art discourses about issues of appropriation and the originality of objects and images.

Antin approaches her subject through opening the back door of cinematic representation and appropriating its own history. *The Man Without a World* is a black-and-white, silent film from 1928 made in 1991. This is a simulation of a film using the formal and theatrical style from the Yiddish cinema of that period. In an interesting twist on Walter Benjamin's problematic notion of the end of the "aura" of the original work of art through the infinite reproducibility of the photographic image (221), the starting point of the film is a play with that aura. After a century of film culture, the aura which Benjamin saw in oil painting really was not obliterated by photographic reproducibility, but rather was shifted and broadened to include cinema and photography. Rather than making a new print of a lost "real" Yiddish film, using the reproducibility inherent to the cinematographic medium, Antin uses the "aura" of the now extinct early silent film as a mirror to her film involving the presence of the original as "the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity" (Benjamin 220). In doing this, Antin engages the history and loss of the relatively unknown Yiddish cinema as a further reflection on lost Yiddish culture in general. The film becomes a series of doublings which frame the experience of those watching and thinking about the film. Like photo-realist painting, part of the experience is the knowledge that the hand-painted work looks so much like a photograph. One marvels at the incredible technique of the painter while at the same time wondering why anyone would make a painting look like the photograph on which it was based. A critical distance from the representation of the scene in the painting is created around technique and the relation between photographic chemical—or non-natural—impression and hand-made—natural—expression. In *The Man Without a World*, the film-maker uses modern technology to recreate the look of the early cinema. The film is black-and-white, silent; the image is slightly speeded up to give the feeling that the camera was hand cranked.

Antin eschews contemporary continuity conventions of shot/reverse-shot and long, medium, and close-up shot combinations. The acting is non-naturalistic, invoking commonly held notions of silent film acting and representation, with their emphasis on gesture and tableau. In fact, the whole film is non-realist. On the one hand, the mise-en-scène is theatrical rather than natural, with sets recalling the German expressionist cinema of the 1920s. On the other, there are scenes that portray the difficulties of shtetl life. We see the poverty, the authoritarian control by both Polish law—as in the scene where the Polish police accepts graft money to allow Jewish businesses to run smoothly, and Jewish law—the father deciding for the daughter whom she will marry. But at the same time, Antin also freely moves the narrative between the verisimilitude of this storyline and sequences which are clearly fantasy and even supernatural, e.g., ghosts rising from the grave in the cemetery to mourn the newly dead, and most spectacularly, the exorcism of the *dybbuk* from Zevi's sister, Soorelah's, body. But what is consistent is the look and visual style of the film, and its disciplined adherence to the look of the earlier cinema on which it is modeled.



Yet despite the faithfulness of this simulation, there is still some slight disparity that is hard to pinpoint. Perhaps it is the texture of the film: not as much silver in today's film stock as in the 1920s, which gave early black-and-white film its luminosity. Once or twice there is a modern camera technique or something that feels contemporary in the story or in the actors' faces. Yes, all of these, but also what is missing is precisely the aura of the original. *The Man Without a World* is at once an original and its copy. It is also an experience all its own. It is our awareness of the slippage between these that frames the film. It is this frame that creates a crack in the seamlessness of the film's historicity, and opens the possibility for other ways of thinking about the events surrounding the story of the film. This perhaps widens the scope of our own relation to this past, making us conscious of the plasticity of events and how we understand them.

The Man Without a World is an amalgam of revisionist history, myth, and archetype, self-reflexivity and the artist's own subjective desire. Like the most radical of postmodern art, the film challenges the modernist aura of authenticity and originality, calling into question narratives that are linear, universalized, or triumphalist versions of history. Antin's film is an attempt to intervene into the dominant single "voice-over" of history and culture that speaks at us, representing power and authority. *The Man Without a World* suggests more contemporary notions of a multiplicity of "histories" and possibilities which may be anti-hierarchical and which question the very form of the linear narrative of inevitability.

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All photos by Becky Cohen, from *The Man Without a World*, with Christine Berry and Pier Marton. *The Man Without a World* is available from Milestone Films.

My thanks go to Eric Smoodin, Visiting Associate Professor in the Film Studies Program at the University of California at Berkeley, for so generously agreeing to act as Guest Editor for this issue of *Film Quarterly*.

A.M.

Heavenly Creatures

Director: Peter Jackson. Screenplay: Frances Walsh and Peter Jackson. Miramax.

The 1950s, Christchurch, New Zealand. An era and place that conjure up an atmosphere of stifling Anglican propriety and reserve. On a cold late June day in 1954, teenagers Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme dashed the serenity of that image by bludgeoning to death Pauline's mother, Honora Rieper, with a brick as the three walked through Victoria Park. Why Parker and Hulme felt driven to commit what became one of New Zealand's most scandalous crimes is vividly recounted in the film *Heavenly Creatures* (1994), written by Frances Walsh and Peter Jackson and directed by Jackson. The film's exuberant style and humor belie its equally serious and deeply disturbing tone that is weirdly empathic to the girls while paradoxically never undercutting the brutal nature of their crime. By turns comic, tragic, fantastic, and romantic, the film, much like its true-life source, defies simple interpretation, yet leads inescapably to an unsettling awareness of a guilt rarely untouched by innocence and an innocence not untainted by some degree of guilt.

Jackson and Walsh based their screenplay on transcripts and psychiatric reports from the Parker/Hulme murder trial, interviews with the girls' classmates, and the diaries from 1953 and 1954 of Pauline Parker. Jackson has indicated that he and Walsh were particularly drawn to and influenced by the girls' own witty and irreverent humor as evidenced in Parker's diaries, which were quoted liberally at the trial and which serve as voice-over material throughout the film.[1] Although publicity for the film brought to light the identity of Juliet Hulme (changed after her release from prison in 1959) as mystery writer Anne Perry, Jackson and Walsh avoid all mention of the fact in the film and did not attempt to contact Hulme/Perry in the course of their research or after the film's release. Jackson, whose previous work includes the gory cult favorite *Braindead* (U.S.: *Dead Alive*, 1993), is aided by his fascination for the inexplicable and grotesque, plunging viewers into a visually vivid world of adolescent imagination, racing along with Pauline and Juliet's sweeping fantasies into sand castles and fanciful kingdoms. Jackson and Walsh temper these audacious visual extremes with an abstruse quality by framing the girls' relationship within distinctively religious parameters and a sense of immutable destiny that characterize their association as a reach for the sublime and mark their fall as all the more tragic.

Jackson and Walsh play up this fateful sensibility with thematic and dramatic devices that shape the ties between the Riepers and the Hulmes into a mythical bond.[2] In one of several self-reflexive moments, Pauline remarks about an opera she is writing, describing it as "a three act story with a tragic end," thereby punctuating Jackson and Walsh's structure as mirroring that of the classic tragedy. The bare facts of the tragedy are that teenage outcasts Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme meet in school, are drawn together by mutual childhood illnesses, become extraordinarily devoted to one another, so much so that when their respective parents grow concerned and try to separate them they become desperate enough to murder Pauline's mother, whom they perceive to be the major obstacle to their remaining together. Jackson, in a radical departure from New Zealand's legendary view of Parker and Hulme as monstrous deviants, calls their tale "[a] murder story about love. A murder story with no villains."[3]

Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme are literally in continual flight from their respective fates, Pauline (Melanie Lynskey) from a despised, dull, working-class background and unremarkable parents (Honora and Herbert Rieper, played by Sarah Pierse and Simon O'Connor), Juliet (Kate Winslet) from ill health, careless parents (Hilda and Herbert Hulme, played by Diana Kent and Clive Merrison) and repeated periods of abandonment. Jackson and Walsh intimate that disaster is brought about not so much by the girls' avoidance of destiny as by their determination to shape it themselves. Juliet's own definition of heaven, "a paradise of music, art, and pure enjoyment," fashions the narrative arc, with the girls' constant imaginative creativity implicated as a major source of their undoing. Although the murder of Honora Rieper is depicted as the nightmarish calamity it indeed was, there is no doubt that an equal part of the horror of the story lies in the unaccustomed positioning of desire and determination in the hands of two adolescent females. The deceptively mild, even playful tampering with gender, class, and age expectations delineated in the film gives an added twist to the odd symbiosis of the sullen, introverted Pauline and the precocious, extroverted Juliet, and unexpectedly provides much of the discomfiture about their association and raises germane questions of past and continuing expectations of gender, especially female, roles.

Although *Heavenly Creatures* explores both girls' lives two years before, up to, and including the murder, ultimately the film concentrates on Pauline's story and her unique tragedy. Surrounded by identically guileless classmates and implacable teachers at school, and overly solicitous parents and insipid male boarders at home, Pauline is emblematic of the Flaubertian heroine in her longing to escape to a world of romance. She is mortified by her family's working-class background, her gregariously simple fish store manager father, and her unimaginatively practical mother who takes in boarders. Jackson parallels the Rieper's homelife and the staid, pragmatic qualities of Christchurch with such disarming (if droll) ingenuousness that they immediately assume the loathsome blandness discerned by the restless Pauline. When pitched next to Juliet's vivaciousness, posh home, and glamorous parents, Pauline's dissatisfactions and romantic hopes appear palpable.

While a common enough predilection, what makes Pauline's discontent unusual is her seeking salvation so fiercely through Juliet. What might otherwise be neatly categorized as a normal, if perhaps hyper, extension of a passing phase of the tumultuous extremes of adolescence in this instance amazingly unfolds instead into matricide. Jackson's running fantasy motif of Pauline happily chasing Juliet across a cruise-liner deck toward Hilda and Henry Hulme perfectly captures Pauline's yearning for/to be Juliet, as well as her wish for the autonomy of the upper-class and the proper family who could provide her with that ideal. Pauline is constantly shown throughout the film in literal pursuit of Juliet (significantly reversed in the walk through Victoria Park). Jackson's near obsessive focus on legs and feet suggests an attempt by the characters to find a bearing, to direct a mercurial fate that eventually proves beyond even Pauline and Juliet's most determined retreats. Juliet, as Pauline's link to this dream, is consequently placed, by her own supreme confidence and Pauline's fervent loyalty (traditionally masculine values), in a position of preeminence rarely allotted women and for which, not surprisingly, she and Pauline—and, tragically, Honora Rieper—will suffer. The consequence, blithely but knowingly painted by the film-makers, is that acumen, desire, and the feminine are an inherently dangerous mix.

The film's lingering and often irreverently humorous religious tone, meant to echo the girls' gradually prospering view of themselves as indeed superior "heavenly creatures," is built upon their constant association with creativity and art (the two meet in art class). Pauline and Juliet's drawing, sculpting, writing, and musical proclivities are interwoven into the narrative diegetically and nondiegetically in impressive fashion, with perhaps the strongest empathic tone gained through an astute use of music, associated with the spiritual and emotional. Peter Dasent's mesmerizing original score is augmented by Jackson's shrewd employment of prerecorded music, the importance of which is emphasized by its actual reference in the script.[4] In the initial musical motif, the framing reference of the divine is established under the opening titles with a girls choir's crisply enunciated rendering of the hymn "Just a Closer Walk with Thee." The hymn's lyric foreshadows Pauline and Juliet's association, emphasizing a strong element of longing: "Just a closer walk with thee, grant if Jesus, it's my plea, daily walking close to thee, let it be, dear Lord, let it be. . . . "

The virtuous tone of the ongoing hymn is contrasted with the pointedly physical introduction to Pauline. The red (danger?) school door is matched by a pan across a clothes-filled clothesline to the red door of a small cottage, which opens to reveal a schoolgirl's coat and skirt hiked up, exposing a thigh and gloved hands pulling up hose to a garter belt before the girl hastens off to join the throng of students heading to school. The emphasis on the corporeal immediately connects Pauline with the erotic and also with death, as a hose stocking will cover the brick used to kill Mrs. Rieper. Combined with the reverential mood set up by the hymn (significantly intoning "Thro' this world of toil and snares . . . who with me by burden shares?"), Pauline is established within a distinctly religious parameter of yearning and, further, within a traditional Christian definition, of seeking life through death (the ultimate object of desire). Her ripeness for "conversion" is underscored as, sullenly silent amongst her booming classmates, Pauline is eyed by an ever-vigilant teacher and then hastily mutters the last line to the hymn, the markedly supplicate words, "let it be." "It" arrives immediately thereafter, in the form of the supercilious Juliet. As the coolly British Juliet is introduced to Pauline and the class, the girls choir is just barely discernible, angelically, in the background, connecting her with the divine, a literal answer to Pauline's prayer.

A more blatant if distinctive musical motif is established with the boisterous tunes of Juliet's idol, Mario Lanza, whose resonant style captures her somewhat manic energy, while also serving as a (humorously campy) link to her insistence on seeking refuge within romantic fantasy. Lanza's singing comes

Grim reality: Melanie Lynskey as Pauline in *Heavenly Creatures*

across as antiseptic "pop opera," particularly in contrast with the poignancy of the Puccini arias used in the darker second half of the film. Amusingly, Lanza is the first and most significant of the girls' self-ordained "saints," and the only figure to traverse between their customized version of paradise, the "fourth world" ("It's sort of like heaven—only better, because there aren't any Christians"), and their more licentious fantasy kingdom (described in a jointly written novel), Borovnia. As such, Lanza literally functions as the primary mediating symbol displacing the girls' burgeoning desire, yet is always held in the realm of the emotional and romantic, in direct contrast to his opposite "cast out" saint, discussed below.

Lanza and his enthusiastically rendered melodies also serve as a barometer of Pauline's emotions, in the girl's initial captivation with Juliet (prophetically, with "Be My Love"), in her uncertainty over Juliet's flights of fancy (swept aside when Juliet propels a startled Pauline into her own ebullience by whisking her off to "The Donkey Serenade"), and in Pauline and Juliet's eventual romantic consummation ("The Loveliest Night of the Year"). Significantly, once the girls commit to their plan to murder Honora Rieper, they burn all their Lanza records, indicating a complete break with the world of enchantment. Lanza's return over the end credits with "You'll Never Walk Alone" provides a powerful backdrop that elicits a particularly ironic pathos after the desolation of the final scenes.

The obvious correlation between musical excess and Pauline and Juliet's emotions is paralleled by the connection between their more tangible artistic pursuits of writing, drawing, and sculpting as further displacements of their simultaneously mounting mutual self-absorption and familial frustrations. This culminates with a startling joint creation of darker consequence, that Jackson and Walsh again fix against a religiously ritualistic backdrop. When Juliet ordains pictures of (exclusively male) film stars as fourth world "saints" one night at a homemade brick altar, renaming them ("He," "Him," "This," "That"), Pauline offers her own "saint," Orson Welles, declaring him "It." Juliet hurls away the picture ("Absolutely not! Orson Welles—the most hideous man alive!"), then immediately grasps the startled if still enraptured Pauline by the hands to give praise to her preferred saints. Juliet's attempts to fling away the unmanageable reality of desire, incorporated in the "hideous" It—Jackson and Walsh's transparent but shrewd allusion to the Id—with a more aesthetic, if egocentric illusion, denies her literal clinging to It in

the form of Pauline. The use of Welles, as the darker "outcast saint," delightfully plays upon his wunderkind reputation as well as his cinematic image as the mysterious, complex, sinister, and very often outside the law rogue, whose most famous role, not uncoincidentally, involves the loss of maternal love. The shot of the dismissed picture of Welles floating down the stream before being swept over a tiny fall, as ominous music swells, suggest that It/desire will not be long denied. Shrouded within the humor of the scene is the uneasy but clear reinforcement of the combination of ego and desire in the feminine as unnatural and unpredictable.

This notion is made even clearer with the girls' vision of the fourth world (prompted by the Hulmes' decision to go abroad for a lengthy stay, without Juliet), realized through morphing effects, described by Pauline's diary entries in voice-over as distinctly edenesque ("full of peace and bliss"), righteously exclusive ("only ten people have [the key]"), and pointedly anti-Christian ("we only recognized it on the day of the death of Christ"). Emphasizing this moment of genesis, the sequence immediately following has Pauline and Juliet assuming the identities of Borovnian royalty, Charles and Deborah, and hilariously enacting the birth of Charles/Pauline and Deborah/Juliet's "heir"—Diello. Diello's literal appearance, first as a tiny clay figurine, then as a lifesize one with distinctly Wellesian features that reveal his identity as It, is immediately connected with excess. Juliet's abrupt recurrence of tuberculosis and four-month quarantine and the girls' resulting frustration at separation prompts Diello's emergence in Pauline and Juliet's daily exchange of letters. The royal heir goes on imaginary, if vivid, killing rampages "to alleviate (Pauline's) boredom (of the dull lower classes)," and to dispense with vexatious adults, such as the sanctimonious minister ("Jesus Loves You") who comes to visit Juliet at the sanitarium and the clumsy doctor ("Do you like your mother?") to whom the Riepers eventually take Pauline. With the conception of Diello the ecstatic exuberance of the Lanza-inspired cavortings and whimsical fantasy of the celestialized fourth world give way to a more ominous indication of desire spinning out of control and, more disquietingly, to the growing regard of the girls for violence as a potential solution to ward off unpleasant realities. This reversal of conventional female prodigality is

Liberating fantasy: Kate Winslet as Juliet

unsettling in its inference that the only possible outcome of any union between women is horror, excess, and death. Yet Jackson and Walsh's somewhat dark intimations do not lead inexorably to matricide, serving instead as provocative endeavors at interpreting the unfathomable depth and complexities of Pauline and Juliet's involvement and their remarkable inward-looking capacity for self-fulfillment.

Themes of transformation and rebirth are suggested by the multiple names given Pauline throughout the film (significantly, the two holidays mentioned in the film are religious and mirror these themes: Christmas/birth, when Pauline gets her diaries, and Easter/rebirth through death at Port Levy where the girls have their "revelation" of the fourth world). Pauline's family, John the boarder, and Dr. Bennett use her middle name, Yvonne. To schoolmates, teachers, and the Hulmes she is Pauline Rieper. Juliet calls her Paul, then Charles, and finally Gina, a Borovnian gypsy clay figurine that Pauline tells John is Juliet's creation. Only as Gina does Pauline find satisfaction, however fleeting. The film's undercurrent of Juliet as the focus of desire, as "divine," and Pauline as her pliant "disciple" seeking salvation and transformation, is stressed as Pauline refers to herself for the remainder of the film as Gina—as does Juliet. Even in the closing moments of the film, with the grisly murder intercut with Juliet on the fantasy cruise ship pulling away and Pauline trapped on the pier, Juliet calls out to Pauline as Gina. Juliet's last words, "I'm sorry," seem an apology for her ultimate inability to sustain the girls' shared paradisiacal delusions and for in fact destroying all their creations, primarily Pauline herself.

However persuasive the film-makers are at weaving a weird if uneasy empathy for Pauline and Juliet's exhilarating alliance, they carefully refrain from demonizing the girls' parents (if not the other adults in the film, who are waggishly presented exclusively from the girls' point of view). The Hulmes are initially bemused, the Riepers confused by Pauline and Juliet's intense mutual devotion, seemingly never fully aware of how their own ordinary deficiencies drive the girls ever closer. Jackson and Walsh characterize the Hulmes' growing domestic misfortunes in a sensitive if sparse manner, focusing more harshly on Henry's trepidation over the fervor of Juliet and Pauline's friendship. Henry's anxiety easily mirrors that of the patriarchal social milieu of the decade, scandalized at impermeable, uncontrollable feminine excess. Both the Riepers' and the Hulmes' inability to grasp the magnitude of their respective daughter's individual and combined alienation and emotional needs decidedly propels the situation towards catastrophe.

Honora Rieper especially finds her daughter's emotional withdrawal and hostility incomprehensible, as is made apparent by her completely guileless response to Dr. Bennett's declaration that Pauline may be (in his terms) homosexual: "But she's always been a normal, happy child." Honora Rieper encroaches on hallowed ground. Juliet's excessive longing for dependable, unwavering parental love and Pauline's absolute rejection of her own parents as deficient creates a tremendous emotional void the girls fill with a frighteningly powerful faith in each other which leaves no room for their hapless parents. Rather than a crime *of* passion, Honora's murder becomes a crime *for* passion, a sacrificial act binding Pauline and Juliet together forever, a reach for the exaltation of mutual faith that ends in damnation with their shattering the most sacred of taboos, matricide.

The film falters slightly in bridging the gap between Pauline and Juliet's leap from emotional desperation at the threat of separation (the Hulmes' breakup precipitating Juliet's relocation to South Africa) to murder. Juliet's enforced separation from Pauline as the latter's homelife crumbles is confused, although the final musical shift to opera stabilizes some of these choppier sections, recalling the theme of mythical and unalterable predetermination. Forbidden to see Juliet, a despondent Pauline considers suicide ("Life seems so much not worth living") as "E lucevan le stelle" from *Tosca* plays on her phonograph ("My dream of love is now destroyed forever, my hour is fleeting and I must die despairing!"). The sense of immutable destiny is augmented by the narrative rupture of Juliet's poignant a cappella rendering of "Sono andati" from *La Boheme* after she agrees to help Pauline murder Honora. Significantly, the fantasy cruise-liner sequence is completed during this scene, as Pauline and Juliet, calling "Mummy," rush into the welcoming embrace of Henry and Hilda, connecting sacrifice/death with fulfillment. The operatic motif is concluded by Pauline, Honora, and Juliet's "last supper" and their fateful walk in Victoria Park to Puccini's haunting "Humming Chorus."

The extravagance linked with opera is indicative of delirium, yet given the somberness of the pieces utilized, it promotes a bleaker tone in sharp contrast to the earlier ebullience of the Lanza music. The musical sense of threatening delirium is articulated when Pauline tells Juliet as the two sit in the bathtub together, "I think I'm going crazy." Juliet (significantly up to her neck in water) replies, "No you're not, Gina,

it's everyone else who's bonkers." In her diary Pauline claims she and Juliet must be mad, as are the saints and even Henry Hulme, which asserts—breaking somewhat with the narrative's constant insinuation of female desire as insanity—that as reality around them sinks into madness they have no choice but to respond in kind. This implicates the girls' surrounding circumstance as at least partially responsible for the coming disaster, reiterates the preordained theme, and subtly insists that female madness is indeed a constructed designation.

The link between feminine desire and madness is reestablished with the film's climax. Parker's diary indicates a sexual relationship with Hulme ("We enacted how each saint would make love. . . . It was wonderful, heavenly, beautiful and ours. . . . We have learned the peace of the thing called bliss, the joy of the thing called sin") that Jackson and Walsh artfully and touchingly translate to the screen, fulfilling the augur of Orson Welles/It as the surrogate of desire. Nevertheless, in discussing the film's lesbian content, Jackson states he believes the issue is something of a "red herring,"[5] despite his own heavily romanticized construction of Pauline and Juliet's relationship. Psychiatric reports given at the trial are contradictory in reaching a conclusion as to whether or not the girls did indeed have a physical relationship, although homosexuality, then categorized as a mental illness, was part of the girls' unsuccessful insanity defense. Jackson's veiled implications that the girls were merely playing out conventional romantic fantasies disregards the fact that they would have had little else but heterosexual prototypes against which to play out nascent longings, lesbian or otherwise. The linking of lesbianism and mental illness falls into a similar psychological tendency of associating any powerful feminine drive with the unnatural and the problematic and therefore needful of a "cure." Placing the girls' romantic fulfillment immediately before their decision to murder Honora completes the connection of sex and death, while stressing their own revered desire to be united on a higher, inviolate plane.

Heavenly Creatures is a startling, brilliantly rendered love story of faith and loyalty that was misguided and misunderstood in its own era perhaps as much as today. Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme, each catalogued as outsider, as other, dared to find and believe in the grandeur of their difference. Their overwhelming, ferocious emotional unity was both audacious and terrifying in its dimensions. Film-maker Peter Jackson and co-screenwriter Frances Walsh rise to the bizarre and dazzling demands of portraying Parker and Hulme's relationship as one that is as peculiarly admirable and touching as it is horrifying. It remains one of the strongest of the all too infrequent cinematic representations of women's interrelationships as capable of passion, intelligence, and fidelity, basking in rather than condemning the extremes of distinctive feminine emotional possibilities, and hauntingly tragic in its revelation of the depth of human frailties when attempting to reach beyond the sublime.

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Notes

1. Interview with Peter Jackson and Francis Walsh by Terry Gross; "Fresh Air," National Public Radio, December 22, 1994.
2. An end title explains Honora and Herbert Rieper were never legally married and so Pauline was charged under her mother's maiden name of Parker.
3. *Heavenly Creatures* press notes.
4. A draft of the screenplay indicates scenes were always built around the use of specific Mario Lanza songs. Jackson and Walsh were guided in their musical selections by Parker's own stated preferences in diary entries mentioning *Tosca* and psychiatric reports that state one of her novels was entitled *The Donkey's Serenade*.
5. Gemma Files, "Those Difficult, Murderous Teenage Years," *Eye Weekly*, January 19, 1995, Toronto, Ontario.

Annual
Film
Quarterly

Book Roundup, Part II

The Art of Film Music

Special Emphasis on Hugo Friedhofer, Alex North, David Raksin, Leonard Rosenman

By George Burt. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1994. $50.00 cloth; $20.00 paper.

George Burt is a composer and music professor whose own film scoring experiences (including Robert Altman's 1985 *Fool For Love*) encouraged him to write *The Art of Film Music*. This text is intended to allow film-makers and composers to communicate more clearly with one another by outlining what music can and cannot do within or for a film—giving film-makers "as clear an idea as possible about what they can reasonably ask of the music" and offering composers graphic examples of "what established composers have done in specific situations" (vii). In the endeavor to help illuminate "where music is needed and the kind of music that would be most helpful," Burt draws upon his own compositional experience, as well as conversations with or critical analysis of Hugo Friedhofer, Alex North, David Raksin, and Leonard Rosenman.

The first three chapters of *The Art of Film Music* focus on the "literary" properties and characteristics of music in the context of film scoring. The fourth chapter offers close analysis of key sequences from *The Best Years of Our Lives* (Hugo Friedhofer, 1946), *Laura* (David Raksin, 1944), and *East of Eden* (Leonard Rosenman, 1955), using their corresponding scores. The fifth chapter studies the function of silence and the absence of music. This is followed by a chapter concerning the production process and personnel involved in film composition. Burt's study is buttressed by extensive excerpts from eighteen film scores and an excellent musical terminology reference glossary.

In *The Art of Film Music* the model for cinematic/compositional practice is defined by films which were produced between the post-silent or "wall-to-wall" sound era and contemporary use of digital and wide-scale synthesizer scoring practices (in the final chapter, such current practices are briefly discussed as technologies). While I am neither a film-maker nor a composer, I would question the view that the purpose of film music is *necessarily* "not to be noticed for itself." While the scope of Burt's work perhaps could not have included a discussion of exceptions to this rule, or growing counter-practices to it within scoring convention, it is significant that throughout the book the case studies for Burt's hypothesis consist exclusively of classical Hollywood narrative cinema between the 1930s and the 1980s. Certainly, parameters for selections must be made—both to enable ease of reference and study (each of these films is available on video), and to establish a terrain of consistency

which offers a system of identifiable rules which are generally followed much of the time. However, within Burt's chronological and canonical framework it would seem that the purposeful "mickey mousing"—that is, the direct synchronization of music to action—of Max Steiner, for instance (e.g., *The Informer*, John Ford, 1935), becomes particularly interesting as an anomaly to scoring conventions.

The practice of "mickey mousing," while certainly clichéd, is still generically viable (many comedies, etc.) but it also relates most closely to visual action (character movement, etc.) and musical movement. This synchronicity of sound and image which Burt cautions against points to a weakness in his film analysis: it slights the correspondence or interrelation of camera *movement* or action within the frame, and musical scoring. While Burt discusses framing in terms of close-ups and shot/reverse-shot, camera angles and movement are strangely absent from his analysis of the selected films. In general, the temporal qualities of film music are discussed in terms of entrances and exits in relation from shot-to-shot. Overall, this contributes to Burt's emphasis on character, dialogue, temporal concerns (the length of close-ups, etc.), and plot progression, as opposed to analysis of filmic space, ambience or mood.

As Burt notes in his "Introductory Remarks," "what is not so easily learned is the cinematic language as it relates to music." Chapter Four, "The Sequence as a Unit," attempts to redress this by analyzing key sequences in the four films mentioned above. Of particular emphasis here is a breakdown of each sequence into its key parts according to the cues which have been scored for that sequence (e.g., *The Best Years of Our Lives'* "Homecoming Sequence" includes "Dawn," "Boone City," "Taxi Ride," and "Arrival at Homer's House").

While Chapter Five suggests an "attitudinal change" in music scoring practice and audience expectations occurred between the silent era and the advent of sound, Burt does not hypothesize a contemporary shift in light of new compositional technologies which have increasingly deconstructed the conventional scoring practice, method, and personnel that Chapter Six outlines in detail. Here, Burt familiarizes the reader with the entire production process in film scoring, including the personnel included, their roles, and the concerns which are resolved at this stage. Methods of orchestral recording and image synchronization are also outlined. While throughout the book much anecdotal information is imparted through the material gleaned from Burt's interviews with major composers, in this chapter he offers insight into his own experience working with Robert Altman, a director who was interested in "an ongoing approach" to scoring.

Burt's easy rapport with the featured composers has led not only to fascinating tales of how their scores came to be, but has allowed him to reproduce some of the most intricate and well-known compositions for film, all in one resource. *The Art of Film Music* perhaps requires a piano keyboard and a video monitor to be at hand, in order to be utilized to its fullest. While Burt assumes no prior technical knowledge of either film or music, he offers valuable, detailed musicological analysis in the text (this is italicized and set apart by brackets). These strengths in Burt's work are slightly undercut by the layout of the text, which is a bit awkward: words which are included in the glossary are not indicated as such in the text; the scores are included in bits dispersed throughout the book, and are referred to by reference number only, which generates much page-flipping for corresponding examples.

Overall, Burt is successful in his goal of providing a handbook or guide to compositional questions, problems, and the overall function of scoring for narrative cinema, within a North American context. While examples such as those from *Laura* are familiar from other analyses of film music, it would seem that this is Burt's very intention—to provide discussions and applications of a compositional model which can be studied in easily accessible film titles which might be familiar enough to look at or listen to in a new way.

VICTORIA E. JOHNSON

■ Victoria E. Johnson is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television, Division of Critical Studies.

The Classic French Cinema 1930–1960

By Colin Crisp. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993. $59.95.

This is a splendid piece of work that deserves a place on the bookshelves of anyone seriously interested in French cinema before the New Wave. It carefully explores an approach to the subject that has been sorely lacking in the literature; in its own (crucially important) domain, it is unlikely to be surpassed in the foreseeable future. One might want to quibble with the title: *The Classic French Cinema* suggests that this will be another book about the country's films, be they masterpieces (the supposedly bad old approach) or less memorable but

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By Colin Crisp. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993. $59.95.

This is a splendid piece of work that deserves a place on the bookshelves of anyone seriously interested in French cinema before the New Wave. It carefully explores an approach to the subject that has been sorely lacking in the literature; in its own (crucially important) domain, it is unlikely to be surpassed in the foreseeable future. One might want to quibble with the title: *The Classic French Cinema* suggests that this will be another book about the country's films, be they masterpieces (the supposedly bad old approach) or less memorable but

more widely viewed fare (as in recent studies of popular stars, genres, etc.). This is not the case; although individual works are mentioned often, typically they serve mainly as rapid citations which support general points about the French film industry.

A better, but doubtless much less marketable title would be *The French Film Industry*, perhaps with a subtitle: *Economics, Infrastructure, Marketing, and Modes of Production*. And then almost no one would buy the book, so probably we are better off with it named as it is, mildly misleading though this may be. The title is useful in another way, as an allusion to David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson's landmark study, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*. Although Crisp rarely adopts Bordwell, Thompson, and Staiger's specific strategies, it is likely that he would not have written his book in the way that he has, or perhaps conceived it as a project at all, without their work as inspiration.

Only at the most general level of argument does the Bordwell, et al. influence not always seem beneficial. For the very notion of a "classic French cinema" does not go without saying. The very complexity of Crisp's analyses often argues against it. At the very least, most clearly in the chapter on economics, one would be tempted to speak of two classic French cinemas, one before the German Occupation and the one beginning with the quite extensive economic reforms introduced with the occupiers' approval and even their encouragement beginning in 1941. And saying that a classic French cinema begins roughly with the coming of sound is even more problematic: most of the economic, organizational, and other factors so lovingly examined by Crisp in relation to the preoccupation period go further back than 1930, and the various "avant-garde" tendencies that marked the 1920s and that largely die out with the coming of sound were, numerically, in the minority of production during the silent era.

Once Crisp chooses to emphasize continuity in a historical field which previously had been examined (by many authors, including this reviewer) mainly as a series of "crises," then the boundaries of his own study come under suspicion. He delights in making various arguments which undermine the popular image of the *nouvelle vague* as representing a kind of qualitatively different transformation point in the history of French cinema, for example, but in so doing he casts suspicion on his own end point. On the other hand, perhaps questions of periodization are best thought of as matters of convenience for historians, rather than as revealing any important truths about the flow and processes of history. Such, in any event, is the point of view suggested by a sympathetic reading of *The Classic French Cinema*.

And it is really hard to be anything but sympathetic and a bit awestruck in reading this book. The quality of its research is uniformly high. To judge by its notes and bibliography, it is the product of many years of intensive labor. Crisp has, it must be noted, based his analyses almost exclusively on trade publications, memoirs, and similar sources, which inevitably makes his findings somewhat less compelling than those of studies of the American and other cinemas based on truly "primary" documents (production memos, financial statements, other company records, etc.). But for the French cinema, such documentation is either completely lacking or impossible for the moment to consult (the extant Gaumont corporate records, for example, supposedly exist but will not be accessible to scholars for at least two years).

Crisp has read the available material exhaustively and with a skeptical attitude. He does not hesitate to quarrel with the received wisdom of the testimony he cites, as for example when he quite convincingly argues that the bad old days of the 1930s were not nearly as bad as often thought. The high number of bankruptcies of production companies for the period, he argues, "proves nothing about the overall viability of the industry. . . . What is interesting is that so many new firms continued to appear" (pp. 21–22). And he quite correctly points out that non-mainstream cinema of the 1950s (Bresson, Cocteau, and other independents) owed its existence largely to the same industrial structure that also produced notorious fluff such as *Caroline chérie*.

This is a book to be read and reread. It provides useful (and often, in and of themselves quite fascinating) mini-histories not only of economic and organizational factors affecting the French film industry during its "classic" period, but also its available studio space and quality of technology, its personnel, the noncinematic channels for the contextualization of film (publicity, criticism, ciné-clubs, festivals, etc.), and so on. Where its major arguments seem weak—and this is rare—the supporting evidence for them remains fascinating and precious. It is a pity that for the moment at least the publisher has chosen not to issue it in paperback, and to price it out of the reach of many of those who would profit from consulting it, citing it, quarreling with it, and helping it to achieve the lasting intellectual afterlife that it so richly deserves.

ALAN WILLIAMS

■ Alan Williams is the author of *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking* and teaches in the Department of French at Rutgers University.

Desire Unlimited

The Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar

By Paul Julian Smith. New York: Verso, 1994. $59.95 cloth; $17.95 paper.

In the introduction to *Desire Unlimited*, the first book-length study in English of Pedro Almodóvar's films, Paul Julian Smith argues that "the Almodóvar 'phenomenon' is inexplicable without a detailed knowledge of the history of the Spanish film industry in the eighties" (p. 4). In an effort to "explain" Almodóvar, therefore, he frames his discussion around an array of cultural themes that include the post-Franco political transition toward democracy, Spanish liberal attitudes about sexuality and gender, and, finally, the way Almodóvar's films have been misread in an international context. The result is a stimulating, fast-paced, often polemical introduction to a highly polemical subject.

One of the most striking aspects of the book is its eccentric format, which Smith describes as having been inspired by one of Almodóvar's favorite editing devices, cross-cutting: "Switching film history, theory, and technique (and not scorning to invoke the humblest or most frivolous of sources), this book also takes cross-cutting as a key to a privileged understanding of a complex and contradictory cinematic phenomenon" (p.6). The objective of this organizing strategy appears to be to produce a text that somehow matches the quirky and often zany style of its subject. In practice, however, such an approach seems at times to work against Smith's own serious intentions by appearing to be more random than rigorous, as the author jumps from one topic to another, at times without clearly establishing the logic that might otherwise join critical concepts.

Despite the surface impression of a loose, playful kaleidoscope of themes, the conceptual coherence of Smith's fix on Almodóvar does eventually reveal itself to be a thoughtful consideration of gender representation and the problems of cross-cultural readings of Almodóvar's sexual thematics. At the same time, it must be said that the effort to package that treatment in an irreverent style often gets in the way of sustained critical discussion of Almodóvar. Thus, *Desire Unlimited* will probably frustrate as much as engage its readers in its exploration of the seemingly contradictory sexual politics of Almodóvar's cinema.

Smith's thesis that a knowledge of Spanish cultural specificity is essential to understanding Almodóvar is most effectively demonstrated in the early chapters as he details the ways the historical moment of *La movida*, the effervescence of a Madrid counter-culture in the early 1980s, relates to the development and reception of Almodóvar's first two films: *Pepi Luci Bom* (1980) and *Labyrinth of Passion* (1982). Though much of this material derives from published work on *La movida*, Smith's reading of the social effect of the politics of the transition and the emergence of a gay subculture in Madrid is insightful and highly original. In particular, his discussion of "the difficulty of representation," which relates issues of production to the thematics of staging and performance, sheds important light on the foregrounding of theatricality in Almodóvar's later films.

Although these early chapters are rich in cultural contextualization, they are notably short on rigorous analysis of the films, a problem that may well derive from the often chaotic scripts of Almodóvar's early works. It is not until the fifth of the book's nine chapters, the discussion of *Matador* (1986), that Smith manages to provide a fairly complete reading of a film while attending to the relation between filmic structure and social context. Here the focus of that analysis, the relation between issues of gender and nation, leads to one of his most persuasive and subtle readings of gay scopophilia in Almodóvar's cinema and lays the conceptual groundwork for his stunning readings of gendered positionalities in *Law of Desire* (1987), *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down* (1990), and *High Heels* (1991). In these latter discussions, Smith is at his best, providing dazzling textual analyses informed by recent feminist and queer theory. At the same time, such discussions implicitly demonstrate just how attention to both contemporary theory and cultural specificity can lead to a productive reading of Almodóvar's cinema.

Part of Smith's project in *Desire Unlimited* is to situate the discussion of gender in Almodóvar's films within a national/transnational context. To that end he frequently shifts his focus to discussions of the reception of the films in Spain and abroad. This is an intriguing and potentially important facet of the larger picture of Almodóvar's spectacular international success. Historians of Spanish cinema have long recognized that the construction and circulation of the image of Almodóvar as celebrity auteur is as much a function of foreign perceptions of Spanish cinema, and implicitly of Spain itself, as it is the result of the director's own ambitious self-promotion. Unfortunately, Smith never fully explores the way these cross-cultural misreadings relate to the historical position of Spain in relation to European and American cultural stereotypes, contenting himself instead with mere refutations of the misreadings of other critics.

In exploring this aspect of the international dialogue around Almodóvar's films, Smith is actually detailing the dynamics of postmodern film authorship as a market-

ing strategy in which, as he acknowledges, the Almodóvar press persona is mutually exploited by both the director and the media, thus hopelessly conflating the film-maker with his films. Precisely because self-construction and self-promotion are so central to the form as well as the substance of Almodóvar's cinema, one would wish for Smith to be a little more discerning with his subject. He acknowledges, for instance, the assistance of Almodóvar's brother and executive producer, Agustín, in providing important materials including shooting scripts and pressbooks that presumably reveal the coherence of authorial intention. But his reliance on these materials gradually moves him from the position of a distanced but engaged scholar to that of an apologist for Almodóvar, defending the films against negative criticism as much as explicating them.

While Smith's contention of the importance of attending to the cultural specificity of Almodóvar's cinema leads him to some of his most cogent insights, his account of Almodóvar's relation to the Spanish film industry and more generally to Spanish film history seems at best a highly selective one. No consideration is given to other Spanish film-makers except to deride them. In particular, the omission of any comments about Luis García Berlanga suggests the narrowness of Smith's view of the larger picture of Spanish cinema. For instance, he speaks of the intricate staging of farcical scenes in *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988) involving multiple planes of action, a feature common to a number of other Almodóvar films as well. Yet he seems unaware of Almodóvar's acknowledged indebtedness to Berlanga's great comic classics of the 1950s and 60s, especially *Plácido*, in which this very same principle of ensemble comedy is central to narrative structure.

An appreciation of Berlanga as a significant antecedent might have led Smith to see the underlying affinity between these two directors, namely an engagement with popular culture, rare among serious film-makers in Spain, that has enabled their work to connect so strongly with popular Spanish audiences. Indeed, Smith's dismissal of Carlos Saura, Fernando Trueba and Mario Camus might seem more convincing as a critical statement if it were linked to the apparent failure of these directors to connect as Almodóvar has done with that national audience. In short, a more complete consideration of the Spanish cinematic context out of which Almodóvar's films emerge would have brought Smith's audience to a fuller appreciation of the national as well as the international implications of Almodóvar's cinema.

Despite this shortcoming, *Desire Unlimited* is far from a negligible work. It offers a series of thoughtful, at times even brilliant readings of a number of Almodóvar's films. As it sketches the conceptual trajectory of this preeminent Spanish auteur, it offers a serious approach to questions of gender in Spanish cinema that should enrich both the future study of Almodóvar's films and our larger understanding of national cinemas.

MARVIN D'LUGO

■ Marvin D'Lugo directs the Screen Studies Program at Clark University and writes frequently on Spanish language cinema.

Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order

Understanding the American Avant-garde Cinema

By James Peterson. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1994. $44.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

The conjunction of aesthetics and applied psychology is responsible for one of the earliest and most perceptive analyses of spectators and the classical Hollywood film, Hugo Munsterberg's 1916 *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*. Now, with a highly synthetic borrowing from contemporary work in cognitive theory, James Peterson proposes a theory of spectators for the American avant-garde film as well. Indeed, what links *Dreams of Chaos: Visions of Order* and Munsterberg's study is the fundamental insight they share: that is, that an account of the ontology of film technology is inseparable from an account of its affect—of the active mental processes that it elicits from the viewer.

One may ask why it has taken until now for this insight to be applied to the avant-garde films of the postwar period—especially given that *The Photoplay* coincided almost exactly with the emergence of classical narrative cinema. The answer, in fact, is what animates this book and the methods it employs. As Peterson notes in his introductory chapter, avant-garde film has been defined predominantly as a reactionary practice: a rejection of the norms that dictate classical production, or a mode of film-making which discloses, and hence implicitly critiques, the normally invisible mechanisms upon which the classical paradigm depends. The tautology of this position makes an interrogation of the spectator's role in avant-garde cinema redundant: the opacity of a work by Stan Brakhage, for instance, is incorporated into the very definition of the film and its genre.

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One of the real achievements of this book is that it dismantles the structures which have long held avant-garde film as the negative term in binary opposition with mainstream cinema. Drawing on constructive theories of perception and principles of discourse comprehension, for example, Peterson is able to characterize the experience of viewing in each of these modes of film-making as an active search for structures—and thus to reformulate the distinction between them as one of degree and not kind. Avant-garde films constitute what Peterson, following problem-solving theorists, calls an "ill-structured problem," one which mobilizes a different set of skills and schema on the part of the viewer from those of classical cinema, which generally enlists all of its resources in the service of narration. That these avant-garde films themselves conform to identifiable and consistent strategies for making meaning is the next step in Peterson's argument and the basis for his re-evaluation of the three main strains of postwar avant-garde film-making: poetic, minimal, and assemblage.

In taking on the film culture of the American post-war period, Peterson confronts the reactionary conception of the avant-garde at a crucial moment in its formulation. The 1950s and 1960s not only witnessed a surge of self-conscious activity, producing the paradigmatic styles of such film-makers as Brakhage, Maya Deren, Andy Warhol, and Bruce Conner; those decades were also heir to a critical apparatus uniquely capable of assimilating new tendencies to its own doctrine. It is no surprise then that an underlying narrative of Peterson's book is an attempt to throw off the polemical legacy of Clement Greenberg (whose formalism and teleological view of modernist practice found brilliant expression in P. Adams Sitney's writings on film for *Film Culture* and *Artforum* beginning in the late 1960s).

One often gets the impression, in fact, that Peterson is fashioning cognitive theory into an interpretive tool precisely in order to penetrate this legacy—in other words, using it as a means of tactically organizing a set of intuitive positions. The strength of the book's arguments about perception and interpretation lie in their tendency to identify phenomena that we can easily corroborate on the basis of our own experiences in front of a screen (not coincidentally, the same can be said of the art historian Ernst Gombrich's theories of schemata in the visual arts, which Peterson cites as a precedent). This does not necessarily imply a criticism of the approach. The virtue, in this book, of the appeal to cognitivism as an analytic model is that it stakes out new reference points for a terrain that has too often been dominated by metaphors of the unconscious and the inchoate—by discourses which Peterson aptly summarizes as "dreams of chaos."

However, the model is problematic where it becomes an end in itself, closing off other routes into this densely layered material and obscuring the implications of its own observations. It seems insufficient, for example, to address the institutional matrix of which the avant-garde films in question were part by invoking the communicative principle of pragmatic theory—the concept that "participants in a communicative exchange must assume that their partner is cooperating, or communication would not be possible." And despite an early disclaimer that a study of film grounded in cognitive theory need not be ahistorical, the analysis does not break much beyond the intellectual apparatus with which it takes issue. It may be argued that the social history of alternative cinema in America has already been written (I'm thinking of David James's 1989 study of American film in the sixties, *Allegories of Cinema*) and that *Dreams of Chaos* provides a basis for new kinds of investigations and interpretations of the field. Nevertheless, a more integrated consideration of the material forces shaping film-making and film reception in the decades following World War II, and an exploration of the implications of cognitivism for a theory of cinematic subjectivity, would have given this analysis more historical weight and, at the same time, would have enabled it to rise more brilliantly above the limitations of its model.

NINA ROSENBLATT

■ Nina Rosenblatt is a doctoral candidate in Art History at Columbia University.

Film at the Intersection of High and Mass Culture

By Paul Coates. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1994. $49.95.

As its title suggests, *Film at the Intersection of High and Mass Culture*, by Paul Coates, is an ambitious, at times unwieldy book that considers international narrative cinema as internally torn between two tendencies: genre and dream. The former is associated mostly with the pressures of the American Hollywood context, as "the brutalizing effects of fantasies"; the latter designates the "responsibility" of the auteur, usually European, who forges a more personal, critical vision, often against and beyond the "prison-house" of genre.

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rambles thoughtfully through a notable diversity of genres (the Western, melodrama, science fiction), directors (Tarkovsky, Cronenberg, Wenders), nationalities (Polish, British, French) and stars (Stallone, Madonna, Valentino). Moreover, the writing often bristles with fresh insights and provocative phrases. But this literary flair sometimes overtakes clarity. In this sense, the ups and downs of the writing style reflect the work's overall utility (and lack thereof) for film study: many pockets of compelling commentary tenuously suspended by an over-extended framework.

Film at the "intersection" of high and mass culture seems to mean film as fluctuating or alternating *between* high and mass culture. This "either/or" approach—he does mention Kierkegaard on page 1—is intriguingly revealed in Coates' preface, which strings out a series of binary oppositions. These dualities seem symptomatic of the study's general compulsion: to analyze contemporary cinema in terms of oppositional structures (high art/mass art being the most overarching). We may contrast this approach to the one more current in film studies, which considers film, after postmodern theory, as "collapsing" the distinction between high and mass art, both textually and institutionally. I am not faulting Coates for ignoring the current theoretical trend, but it does seem a bit regressive to reassert the high/mass distinction so neatly. Thus, the term "intersection" in his title is a bit misleading.

Coates intends to abolish the high art/mass art gap; yet he seems throughout to sustain it as a threshold. For example, after fruitfully distinguishing his notion of a "re-figured" genre from that of Hollywood pastiche—which reproduces "genre in the form of a plastic death-mask, using knowing inverted commas to broadcast superiority to its prototype"—he lapses into an obscure "academic" discussion of "part-whole" relationships. Though Coates insists that his book is a "multi-leveled meditation on part-whole relations," it never becomes clear what he means.

The introduction on popular culture, "Kitsch, Art and the Audience," articulates the book's modernist stakes, by using Benjamin, Adorno, Jameson and Williams to postulate the gesture against genre as a sort of return of the repressed, a vindication of the exiled dreams expressed by the "great" works. Part One clumsily deigns to explore the identity of "the masses" by considering the role of the audience, and that of looking (voyeurism), within certain films. He makes some interesting comments about West's novel *Day of the Locust*, and about *The Purple Rose of Cairo* and *The Player*, for their representations of the mass film audience, which might be summarized respectively as dystopic, utopian, and ironic. Likewise, his discussion of films about voyeurism sets up a useful comparative trajectory, from schlock Hollywood (*The Bedroom Window*) to self-conscious brat pack (*Body Double*) to European "vision" (*A Short Film about Love*).

Yet Coates shifts from one medium to the next too easily. He discusses West's novel, which, yes, is about film audiences, but why not discuss Schlesinger's *film* of the novel as well? Or, at least, why not address this slippage, from novel to film? In fact, the book is crammed with literary allusions that seem oddly out of place in a book about film as "intersecting" high and mass culture. Along these same lines—the assumed analogy between distinct media—Coates passes from *The Purple Rose of Cairo* to *The Player* via a digression on rock music audience relations. In fact, many chapters start out with a clear and seductive focus (especially his interpretation of voice-over in film noir and, later, in third world films) but then drift haphazardly and impulsively.

An inspiring consequence of this "speculative, essayistic" style is how Coates re-invigorates topics apparently exhausted by recent film studies. Part Two, on genres, postulates science fiction as modernism's "dialectical counterpart," in preparation for a provocative discussion of *Solaris*, *La Jetée*, and Cronenberg's *The Fly*. The author also provides some fresh angles on melodrama, making a bold gesture by coming down hard on Sirk for his politically conservative celebration of the individual. However, this latter essay becomes stuffy with highbrow allusions to Richardson (Samuel, not Tony) and Hopkins (Gerard Manley, not Anthony); it also becomes reductive: "It seems there is melodrama and there is melodrama."

The book resolves itself nicely by coming full circle, with a chapter titled "Lucid Dreams," which considers the representation of dreams (as opposed to mass audiences) in film. Yet the appendices crystallize how the top-heavy scope of the book spreads itself too thin: they re-insist on Hollywood's "brutalizing effects" by describing Lang's fall from Germany to Los Angeles, and how the low-budget slasher style's assimilation into Hollywood blockbusters involves a colonialist subtext. This incisive ideological critique, tacked on, feels like a desperate attempt to make sure this study defends high art—from the masses.

DAVID LADERMAN

■ David Laderman teaches at the College of San Mateo and at San Francisco State University.

French National Cinema

By Susan Hayward. New York: Routledge, 1993. $15.95.

There is a spirit of archaeological mission animating Susan Hayward's book *French National Cinema*, one which emerges, at the level of style itself, in the taxonomies and spatial metaphors which pervade her text. Thus, the multiple appeals to mapping, the division of material according to axes and typologies, disclose the breadth and density of her field of inquiry: Hayward proposes nothing less than a history of French cinema and the French cinematic industry from its origins through the 1980s. These tropes also indicate the inherent difficulty of attempting to organize that field intelligibly by means of a single concept—especially when the concept itself is as heterogeneous and confused as "nationalism."

Not that Hayward is unaware of the nature or magnitude of her undertaking. An obvious motivation behind this book is a desire to bring to light the unexamined assumptions that have informed other approaches to national cinema—approaches which Hayward perceives as being exclusionary, focusing too narrowly on the canonized directors and movements of high art cinema. And, in an introductory chapter, she systematically unpacks the very phrase "national cinema," offering a brief definition of the concept of a nation, and a more extensive discussion of the double sense in which cinema can be understood to be national: i.e., cinema which is constituted as "national" through discursive and institutional practices; and cinema which produces a concept of the national through its own specific traditions and practices.

But the problems in Hayward's argument are not the result of a lack of attention to such details, or a failure to dissect her material thoroughly enough. Nor can she be faulted at the level of research; the book displays a truly stunning knowledge of both the films and the sociopolitical history of France. Rather, where her account falls short is in its effort to locate the connections that would restore these films and events, the promising fragments that comprise her study, to a compelling and meaningful history.

The book's equivocal and ultimately reductive treatment of cinema as an ideological phenomenon is exemplary of this shortcoming. In the opening pages of the book, for example, Hayward explicitly rejects the Marxist theory of culture as a simple reflection of political and economic relations (although even here, her remark that "to date Marxist theory on culture has predominantly stressed this odd unidirectional relationship between base and superstructure" seems a reductive, if not naive, characterization of Marxist interpretation). Drawing on the refinements of Raymond Williams and of such neo-Marxists as Gramsci, Althusser, and Marcuse, she situates her study within a more supple, mutually determining model of the relations between material and symbolic production.

Nevertheless, when it comes to defining the interaction between films and nationalism at any given moment in French history, Hayward resorts to a surprisingly unmediated concept of "transparency." Films are evaluated according to whether they do or do not offer a window onto what Hayward identifies as the national preoccupations of the period; hence, the appearance of rural settings in realist films of the 1920s is described as participating in an idealization of the land in the face of threatening urbanization, and thus " . . . allowing national sentiment to be exalted through the beauty of the landscape." But by the same logic, the general absence of World War I in films of the same period is equally relevant to a discussion of nationalism, revealing, according to Hayward, the inability of a nation to deal directly with a radical challenge to its sense of identity; and explaining the proliferation of historical reconstruction films in the inter-war period as an effort to reclaim that identity through idealized visions of the past.

Although such examples, taken out of context, cannot convey the complexity of Hayward's arguments, they do point to two predominant and troubling tendencies in her book: first, an ambition to weave all of her material into a set of neat, overarching propositions about French cinema, at the expense of developing the deeper interconnections that might make her assertions more subtle and convincing; and second, a tendency to characterize political and social history as a source for films to draw on, instead of as a force immanently and multiply shaping them. Curiously, Hayward herself indicates ways in which such reductiveness might have been avoided—most notably in her frequent invocation of Roland Barthes' notion of "myth" to describe the relationship between cinema and history (oddly, Hayward does not mention Barthes' celebrated analysis, in *Mythologies*, of the concept of Nation as myth). In the end, however, what is missing from Hayward's analysis is the kind of theoretical framework upon which Barthes builds his work; what is missing is an understanding or an elaboration of the mechanisms through which ideology immerses itself in the forms of everyday life, through which the material becomes the symbolic, and political and social practices become the signs by which individuals represent themselves, their nation, and their history.

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Hard Bodies

Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era

By Susan Jeffords. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994. $42.00.

In *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*, Susan Jeffords attempts to define American masculinity and situate that monolithic concept in the blockbuster films of the decade (1980–92). For the most part, the volume succeeds in sketching out the parameters of a definition of masculinity, grounded in the "hard-body" physicality and persona of Ronald Reagan, whose face appears on the cover with an Arnold Schwarzenegger torso.

The public persona of the president is obviously important in addressing issues of masculinity in the 1980s, so Jeffords concentrates on "the correspondences between the public and popular images of 'Ronald Reagan' and the action-adventure Hollywood films that portrayed many of the same narratives of heroism, success, achievement, toughness, strength, and 'good old Americanness' that made the Reagan Revolution possible." (15) She chooses just those films that prove her thesis and ignores (or misreads) those that might provide counterfactual evidence. Furthermore, she makes her case primarily through the analysis of plot events, dialogue, and characterizations. The cinematic and psychoanalytic signifiers of masculinity are all but ignored. As a result, the specificity of cinema and some of its primary scholarly methodologies are elided in favor of a sociological "images of men" perspective. Although some of the analysis here is impressive, film theory (especially feminist film theory) moved away from this approach twenty years ago.

Jeffords uses as her sample the films most seen by U.S. moviegoing audiences during the 1980s, which she avers "were largely and consistently concerned with portrayals of white male action heroes." (12) In theory, using the highest grossing films of a period as a sample should give us some insight into the dominant values of the mass audience, but Jeffords ignores many box-office smashes or Academy Award winners that do not fit her white male "hard-body" paradigm: *Tootsie, Ordinary People, The Elephant Man, Gandhi, Amadeus, The Color Purple,* and many others. One would be hard-pressed to tie these films to the Reagan iconography of masculinity.

Undeniably, the Reagan persona and policies had many obvious avatars in the popular American films of the 1980s. That said, Jeffords's essentializing can be disconcerting. It is one thing to equate Robocop's crime-fighting abilities with the New Right's law-and-order rhetoric in a general way; it is quite another thing to trot out Reagan's 1981 inaugural address ("It is time to check and reverse the growth of government . . . ") and compare it with Robocop's mission: "Reagan, like Robocop, touted himself as the defender of the average citizen who needed a break from too much government" (20). Jeffords's analysis, here and elsewhere, would be more astute if it were less one note, e.g., "[The] articulations of bodies constituted the imaginary of the Reagan agenda and the site of its materialization" (24). For Jeffords, the era of greed was the era of hard bodies; the material relations of production are read through the cookie cutter grid of masculinity. The problem of the 1980s, though, was not that Reagan chopped wood or mounted a horse; it was that he chopped social programs and mounted an unprecedented military/nuclear buildup. The problem was not his image but his public policies.

Naturally, Jeffords is on solid ground when she analyzes the Rambo character as a Reaganite icon. The hypermasculinity and hard body of Sylvester Stallone came to represent a national mastery over foreign and domestic enemies. But in pinning her thesis on one hook—physiognomy—Jeffords minimizes the complex of articulations and determinants that make up any cultural artifact.

Jeffords's analyses of *The Terminator, Lethal Weapon,* and *Robocop* are insightful. She suggests that although "the Rambo films worked out the Reagan foreign policy through battles with the Soviet Union, these films work out the Reagan domestic policy through homefront battles with internal enemies of Reaganism: terrorism, lawlessness, disloyalty, and the deterioration of the family" (53). Here, at least, Jeffords concedes that muscularity is not the main issue but a symbolic figuration of a larger structuring system in 1980s cinema.

One chapter of *Hard Bodies* deals with fathers and sons, a theme that is found in many of the biggest box-office hits of the 1980s. In her discussion of the *Back to the Future* films, Jeffords's Reagan analogies seem more apt: "As Marty coaches his father from a wimp to a rescuer, Reagan set out to coach America from acting the part of the 'wimp' of the Carter years . . . to being the economically and socially successful international father of the Reagan years" (71). Although an exact homology is implied here (Marty = Reagan), Jeffords also contends that Doc Brown is a Reagan surrogate, because he survived an assassination attempt in the first *Back to the Future* film. The interpretations are more convincing here because Jeffords generally uses direct evidence from the films to support her claims.

Jeffords then returns to the Rambo series as an exemplar of the symbolic father-son relationship

(Trautman-Rambo) and the importance of the father figure's role in constructing images of masculinity. In doing so, she traces the changes through all three *Rambo* films. In the final installment, Rambo takes the place of his symbolic father and becomes a father himself, to a young Afghan boy. The comparisons to Bush replacing Reagan as the nation's father figure are intriguing, albeit simplistic. In fact, Rambo is a rather transparent cultural symbol of masculinity and Reaganism; references to the superhero appear on 54 pages. This attention to one character throws off the balance of the book and suggests again that the author has just used the most obvious examples to prove her contentions.

At one point, Jeffords eschews a causal connection between real-life politics and the films of that era: "It is not possible to say that the Reagan Revolution *caused* such stories to be written or to be so popularly viewed." (86) But she provides a reflection theory explanation: "Both the Reagan Revolution and these film sequences captured in some sense the concerns of American audiences and offered a resolution to their anxieties through the restoration of a happy father/son relationship." (86–87) Unfortunately, equating Col. Trautman, Doc Brown, Dr. Jones, and Obi-Wan Kenobe with Ronald Reagan because they all "stand as emblems of a personal and national identity that could be recaptured" (87) is as imprecise as the nostrums of the 1980s.

One important aspect of Jeffords's thesis is on target: that the male body image of the Reagan years was altered during the Bush administration. For Jeffords, the Bush era saw "a rearticulation of masculine strength and power through internal, personal, and family-oriented values" (13). Indeed, Chapter Four is devoted to the Bush style: a mix of the Reagan inheritance and Bush's "kinder, gentler" vision of America. This combination is best exemplified by *Twins* (1988). Jeffords's basic premise is ingenious: that Schwarzenegger and DeVito represent Reagan and Bush, the different sides of the Republican party. It was, in fact, the Republican campaign strategy in 1988 to portray George Bush as Reagan II, as twins with the same conservative inheritance. At times, however, the analogy seems forced: "When it is said of [the DeVito character] that 'you'll probably find him in jail,' there is an echo of Bush's own tainted role in Iran-contra." (93)

Jeffords posits an emotional domestic hero figure, a transition figure between Reagan and Bush. Jeffords's analysis is lucid and penetrating with regard to the Bush-era films: "The hard body that emblematized a renewed national and international strength has been repudiated, not for a return to the soft body of the Carter years, but for the creation of a body in which strength is defined internally rather than externally, as a matter of moral rather than muscle fiber." (136) In one instance, however, her analysis is dead wrong: "The blockbuster male heroes of the late 1980s are almost exclusively white men, because mainstream America was not prepared to perceive African-American men in the position of controlling and defining justice." (138) This ignores the *Beverly Hills Cop* series, *Lean on Me*, several Spike Lee films, *Stand and Deliver*, and many other independent black/Latino films and, furthermore, blames American society for creating these all-white images, rather than the Hollywood film establishment.

Moving to the early 1990s, Jeffords provides a political analysis focused mainly on "family values," the only "secure legacy of the Reagan ideology." (141) According to Jeffords, *Kindergarten Cop* (1990) "shows how the transition from law enforcer to family man was sketched out." (141) Her plot analysis here fits her thesis perfectly since John Kimball is transformed from brutal cop (Reagan) to nurturing kindergarten teacher (Bush). As the author summarizes, "The message? The emotionally and physically whole man of the eighties would rather be a father than a warrior." (143) In her search for a monolithic, one-sentence "message," Jeffords too often posits an unalloyed image of masculinity that claims to represent the age, when every era produces contradictory and polyvalent discourses on how men should behave, look, and think.

Even *Beauty and the Beast* is recruited to the cause: "[The Beast] is the New Man, the one who can transform himself from the hardened, muscle-bound domineering man of the eighties into the considerate, loving, and self-sacrificing man of the nineties." (153) The transmogrification is most apparent in *Terminator 2*, in which the title character's persona was altered radically from the first installment ("Once he was programmed to destroy the future. Now his mission is to save it"). The "reprogrammed" Terminator, who is a "kinder, gentler" version of the earlier machine, is, however, also equated to Reagan.

The final chapter of *Hard Bodies* explores the Reagan legacy, especially Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1992). According to Jeffords, the protagonist is "both father and gunfighter, able to live in a peaceful world but also able to survive in a 'dangerous and unpredictable place.'" (180) One could argue that the aging of the Eastwood persona signifies a need for a once-great America to revert to its former ruthlessness. Even though Munny has trouble mounting his horse and is beset by illness and dread, he still acts out the macho role when the chips are down. Despite this critique, Jeffords does bring some observant details to the fore. For one, she notices the abundance of American flags and hollow patriotism in *Unforgiven*, as well as the low-angle shots of Eastwood, with red, white, and blue bunting in the background.

Ultimately, Jeffords's conclusion is insightful and clearly stated: "The hard body has remained a theme that epitomizes the national imaginary that made the Reagan Revolution possible. . . . [It] continues, in the post-Reagan, post-cold war era, to find the national models of masculinity conveyed by some of Hollywood's most successful films." (192) Nonetheless, these are still dangerous images, representing "the desperation of an aging superpower that is reluctant . . . to relinquish its international status and influence." (193) Thinking ahead, Jeffords predicts that the Clinton presidency may usher in a "redefinition of the masculine" and "another phase in the extended narrative of 'American identity.'" (23)

Hard Bodies's ideological heart and mind are in the right (or should I say "left") place. I only wish that the filmic evidence proffered had clinched the case and that the author's methodology had been more informed by recent cinema scholarship and paradigms.

FRANK P. TOMASULO

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Hollywood in Berlin

American Cinema and Weimar Germany

By Thomas Saunders. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994. $40.00.

Thomas Saunders intends his history of German-American film relations during the Weimar Republic to rectify two misconceptions common to studies of this well-documented era. First, previous studies of the Weimar cinema have focused on selected masterpieces. Saunders argues that the Weimar cinema was "a blend of kitsch, realism and expressionism with German accents but anchored in international narrative and identificatory modalities." (8) Second, most discussions of German-American film relations have presented a static rather than evolving association and assumed American ascendancy extrapolated from the experience of other European cinemas. Saunders marshals a wealth of documentary evidence to prove that German-American film relations were highly complex and very contentious.

Citing distribution agreements, exhibition statistics, publicity campaigns, and most of all film reviews, Saunders traces the vicissitudes of Hollywood's impact on the Weimar film market. The earliest Hollywood releases (mostly thriller serials) were dismissed as hopelessly sensationalist, suitable only for "hillbillies in Arizona," as one critic put it. (130) In 1924, a broad range of American films was released, including high quality films such as Cecil B. De Mille's *Saturday Night* and Erich von Stroheim's *Greed*, and American dominance of the Weimar film industry reached its peak. In the extensive critical reassessment that ensued, Hollywood films garnered praise for their technical achievements but they were found wanting in historical sense, narrative coherence, and ethical complexity.

Saunders urges us not to take these claims too seriously. Critics were more aghast that films like *Elmo, The Mighty* were a hit with supposedly sophisticated German audiences than genuinely disturbed by the aesthetic shortcomings of American films. Saunders also reminds us that Weimar studios had designs on the same world market dominated by Hollywood, only to find that German culture was far less exportable than was American culture. While German film producers failed to seriously challenge Hollywood in the global market, they managed to prevent their total eradication in the domestic market. Hollywood burst onto the world scene in 1917 but did not capture a significant share of the German market until at least five years later. Even then it never monopolized exhibition space to the extent that it did in Britain or France. Weimar Germany could resist American films because it had an internationally secure reputation for high quality, innovative films earned in the years immediately following the war. Furthermore, countering the assumption that Hollywood dominance was irreversible, with the coming of sound American films almost completely vanished from the German market, much to everyone's surprise.

The strengths and weaknesses of Saunders' study lie in his use of source material. He is very scrupulous about conjecture, preferring to relate only what he can document. For example, in 1924 the Weimar film industry insisted that Hollywood's popularity was waning. Saunders finds inconclusive evidence for this claim. Unable to reach any conclusions from the "conflicting evidence" of gate receipts, (150) he proceeds to document the bulk of his historical narrative with film essays in the popular and trade presses.

This strategy has benefits, but a few drawbacks as well. On the positive side, Saunders uncovers some remarkably thoughtful and insightful critics writing for the popular press, most notably Hans Siemens, whom Saunders invokes whenever he needs someone to deflate the pompous declarations of some journalistic hack with a reactionary political agenda. In 1921, when most of his colleagues still had scant praise for the American cinema, Siemens had the temerity to suggest that the domes-

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tic industry could learn from Hollywood. In one essay he argued that Americans combined personality and setting into a "natural" synthesis, while Germans overacted in boring chamber dramas. Soon other critics joined Siemens in employing Hollywood films as a means of critiquing German cinema.

With commendable skill, Saunders sorts through a vast array of critical writings and presents a coherent debate that culminates in what he calls the "slapstick synthesis" of mass entertainment and art. In a chapter on Charlie Chaplin's reception in Germany, the book's best, Saunders argues that slapstick "promised redemption from a number of interlocking cultural impasses." (178) At first, critics wondered why Germany had no native tradition of slapstick. They concluded that the fatalism and conformity in their national character prevented Germans from creating slapstick heroes who flouted authority and nimbly extracted themselves from adverse situations. Later, the debate around slapstick evolved into a wide-ranging discussion of mass entertainment, technology, and traditional culture. American slapstick comedies persuaded Weimar critics to reflect upon the social context of genres. Slapstick comedies, many claimed, showed ordinary people liberated from the constraints of a technorationalized society and represented the first true art for the masses.

At this point, however, a difficulty emerges with Saunders' dependence on criticism published in the commercial press for his historical record: Exactly who are these masses? Gauging popular sentiment is a notoriously difficult problem for historians, but one wonders about the veracity of his choice of film critics to represent popular attitudes about Hollywood. As Saunders himself points out, many critics were versed in elite standards of aesthetic value derived primarily from literature. Thus, oftentimes they were appraising American films from a different frame of reference from that of ordinary filmgoers in the Weimar Republic, the majority of whom were lower middle class. In his study the mass audience remains undifferentiated along class and gender lines, making the *Kulturkampf* over the cinema seem like the preoccupation of a group of quarrelsome film reviewers rather than part of a larger social and political struggle in the Weimar Republic. This shortcoming is conspicuous in light of much recent work in this area that has focused on defining audiences and their responses to specific film texts. Miriam Hansen, for example, deploys a more sophisticated model of audience response in her study of the American silent cinema in *Babel in Babylon*. Patrice Petro's *Joyless Streets* differentiates Weimar cinema audiences—and film critics—along gender lines, while recent works by Thomas Elsaesser and Bruce Murray have detailed the socioeconomic and political conflicts of the era.

This is not to say that *Hollywood in Berlin* does not make a significant contribution to the study of Weimar cinema. Saunders not only presents a much more complicated relationship between the American and Weimar cinemas than previously was assumed, but he also offers an excellent case study for the impact of American popular culture in the global economy. By contrasting debates on aesthetic value of American and German films with the complex economic realities of the global film market, Saunders compels us to reconsider generalities about Hollywood's dominance of world cinema. He also reminds us that part of the history of American film must be written in the context of the foreign cinemas that both absorb and reflect its influence.

RICHARD PROUTY

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Hollywood TV

The Studio System in the Fifties

By Christopher Anderson. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994. $45.00 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Contrary to what its title might imply, *Hollywood TV* is not exclusively about the studio system. Actually, the book consists of three well-wrought case studies illustrating how different facets of the film industry broke into television production. The first case is of a prestigious old-guard independent producer, David O. Selznick, who made a television spectacular called *Light's Diamond Jubilee* in 1954; the second is of another established independent producer, Walt Disney, who launched the *Disneyland* program the same year; and the third is of a venerable Hollywood studio, Warner Bros., which produced *Warner Bros. Presents* as its foray into telefilm production in 1955. The three programs were produced as cross-promotion efforts: *Light's Diamond Jubilee* celebrated the invention of the light bulb and the peaceful use of atomic energy; *Disneyland* promoted Disneyland the theme park; and *Warner Bros. Presents* publicized the studio. The programs also shared similar formats, formats that soon became outmoded as Hollywood accommodated itself to the networks, to sponsors, and to the television audience.

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University of Texas and the Warner Bros. Pictures Collections at the University of Southern California and at Princeton University.

Light's Diamond Jubilee is described by Anderson as "the most heralded entertainment program in the brief history of television, a two-hour tribute to Thomas Edison that aired Sunday evening, 24 October 1954, on all four existing TV networks and more than three hundred stations." (70) Producing the show, David O. Selznick was out of his element. As a prestigious Hollywood independent producer, Selznick had secured his own financing and had complete autonomy over the making of his pictures. A perfectionist, he would spend whatever time or money necessary to get results. However, such work habits did not fit television production with its fixed budgets, inflexible production schedules, and close ties to advertising agencies. Because Selznick was ignorant of television and its "power relations," *Light's Diamond Jubilee* went over budget and Selznick lost $87,000 of his own money on the venture.

Anderson chose Selznick to represent the Hollywood producers who "made the transition from movies to television without fanfare." (70) Selznick was on a "downward spiral" when he accepted the job to produce *Light's Diamond Jubilee* and wanted to revitalize his career. However, since Anderson mentions no other name in Selznick's league, we are led to believe that Selznick was an anomaly. Anderson seems to support this conclusion in his survey of the most active entrepreneurs in the telefilm business, which situates their origins in Poverty Row (Hal Roach Studios), talent agencies (MCA), minor studios (Columbia's Screen Gems), and the lower echelon of stars (Desilu Productions), but not the top executive ranks of the studios. Nonetheless, the Selznick case study reveals much about early fifties television, particularly the extent to which sponsors manipulated the medium to create "media events."

Unlike Selznick, Disney was on an upward trajectory when he entered television and he understood the medium. Using television as a marketing tool, Disney designed his TV series to conform to the design of his theme park; "both the series and the park were divided into four familiar movie industry genres: Fantasyland (animated cartoons), Adventureland (exotic action-adventure), Frontierland (Westerns), and Tomorrowland (science fiction)." (141) Disney introduced each episode, which typically used extensive footage from the Disney Library. Enormously popular, *Disneyland* advertised merchandise, new theatrical releases, and the theme park. Placing the program in a larger perspective, Anderson discusses ABC's rationale for investing a half million dollars in the theme park in order to acquire the television series and Disney's strategies to convert his theme park into a national institution.

Although Anderson did not have access to the Disney corporate records, he could have fleshed out the case study by probing deeper into Disney's operations. Disney built his business as a producer of animated cartoons and features. What made him switch to True-Life Adventures features? Disney had been interested in television all along; in fact, he dropped United Artists as his distributor in 1936 over a dispute about television rights. What did he see in the nascent medium?

Disney's success in using TV influenced the format of all the programs initially produced by the majors—*Warner Bros. Presents*, *MGM Parade*, and *The Twentieth Century-Fox Hour*. To secure a national audience for these shows, studios and the networks had to confront such questions as "What form should a studio-produced television program take?" "Could a major studio organize the production process efficiently enough to meet network broadcast schedules and TV budgets?" and "How could the program be designed to serve both the studio's self-promotional goals and the network's need to attract a competitive audience share?" (157)

Anderson begins the Warner Bros. case study by analyzing how post-war conditions in the industry leading to the decline in moviegoing and the shift to independent production created unused capacity—idle studios, in other words. Adapting to these conditions, Warner Bros. regarded telefilm production as a way to reduce overhead costs, just like B films did. The studio also regarded telefilm production as an opportunity to revive the public's flagging interest in the movies. Signing an exclusive deal with ABC, Warner Bros. structured its series around an alternating format consisting of three programs, *Cheyenne*, *Casablanca*, and *King's Row*, each of which was based on the Warner Bros. film that inspired it. Gig Young served as the narrator and introduced the drama, which came first and lasted about forty-five minutes, the short trailer for the following week's program, and the "Behind the Cameras at Warner Bros." segment showing "backstage glimpses of stars" and an "insider view of studio productions." (171) ABC permitted Warner Bros. to adopt such a self-aggrandizing format so long as the studio imbued each episode with the production values and spectacle that characterized quality Hollywood film-making.

Thus began Warner Bros.' anguished and sometimes tortuous relationship with network television. Forced by ABC to cope with the demands of the medium, Warner Bros. revived the "producer-unit" system of management to organize television production and restructured the program again and again until it met the needs of the network and the program sponsors. Warner Bros. got it right after a couple of seasons and became one of ABC's prime suppliers of programming. But Warner Bros. paid a steep price for its preoccupation

with the efficiencies of mass production. As the least visionary company in the business, in Anderson's opinion, Warner Bros. Television declined because it failed to diversify into other areas of the television industry, produced programming that was largely undifferentiated, treated its stars miserably, and locked itself into a relationship with only one network.

Some of these conclusions are debatable, but all in all, Anderson's study is informative and provocative. Most of the material is new and illuminates a side of Hollywood that has largely been ignored. *Hollywood TV* makes a real contribution to film and television scholarship and also cross-promotes the benefits of tapping archival resources.

TINO BALIO

■ Tino Balio teaches in Film & TV Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is the author of *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939.*

Ingmar Bergman

The Art of Confession

By Hubert I. Cohen. New York: Twayne, 1993. $26.95 cloth; $14.95 paper.

It's probably a good thing that we don't know much about Shakespeare's personal life, habits, relationships, moods, dreams, actions, or possessions. Although we may feel that we miss something by not recognizing the "personal" components of his artistry, we are set free: to speculate about him if we choose, but mostly to investigate and appreciate his works apart from the weight of personality.

This is not the case with Ingmar Bergman, who, for what it's worth, may have as great a claim as anyone to being the modern Shakespeare. There is an enormous amount of material available about Bergman, not only because of the efforts of indefatigable moles of journalism and scholarship, but also because of Bergman's own penchant for self-disclosure in his numerous interviews, autobiographical books, and, most interestingly, his films. It is thus Bergman himself who implicitly assures Hubert I. Cohen of the essential aptness of his particular approach to the film-maker's life and work, based on the premise that personal background and cinetextual foreground are inseparable and barely distinguishable, and that the teller and the tale merge into a continuously unfolding and perpetually fascinating union.

The tale is, not surprisingly, a rather grim one, and Cohen's 500+ page book, perhaps even more than Bergman's ouevre of 50 plus films, is colored only in shades of gray. *Ingmar Bergman: The Art of Confession* is comparable to Donald Spoto's *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock* in terms of what the author does both for and to his subject. First, he lets the cat completely out of the bag: Bergman is evidently not a nice man, and far from being a patient and meditative sufferer or humble artisan (like the anonymous faithful contributors to medieval churches that Bergman occasionally likened himself to), he is characterized (even by himself) as irrepressibly vain, brutal, manipulative, and self-centered, always willing to inflict his torments on everyone else. But this is not the complete story: Cohen's main focus is on how Bergman's "almost pathological narcissism" (ix) and various demons become the engines and subjects of his art, an art of wounds and scars but one that at its best turns selfishness, pain, and aggression into moments of clarity.

After an introductory biographical chapter examining Bergman's early years as a "Sunday's child," in close touch with the supernatural and deeply damaged by family life with a stern and hysterical father, depressed and suicidal mother, and hostile and fascistic older brother, Cohen turns to what he calls an "analytical-narrative approach." (xiv) Following a chronological order, he painstakingly summarizes the plot and distinctive features of each film and offers a running commentary on Bergman's developing thematics and neuroses. This method has obvious strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, Cohen's detailed descriptions of the lesser known and infrequently screened early films are particularly valuable. He has a fine eye for visual detail and even when he treats the more well known and readily available films he invariably calls attention to subtleties of plot and cinematic design well worth highlighting for both new and experienced Bergman watchers. But Cohen is caught in the unhappy dilemma of not knowing how much to expect from his readers, and he almost always opts to tell more rather than less. As a result, some readers will find long sections of the book tedious and, if they have seen the film being described, redundant.

There is a cumulative power in Cohen's approach, though, that goes beyond occasional tedium. He constantly cross-references the films to one another, illustrating how Bergman works with an identifiable substructure of repeated themes, images, actions, and expressive techniques. Sometimes this yields predictable findings: that Bergman tells basically one story, revolv-

with the efficiencies of mass production. As the least visionary company in the business, in Anderson's opinion, Warner Bros. Television declined because it failed to diversify into other areas of the television industry, produced programming that was largely undifferentiated, treated its stars miserably, and locked itself into a relationship with only one network.

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ing around inescapable narcissism, divided families, an absent God, and inevitable death; that his characters oscillate between poles of cruelty and humiliation; and that mirrors and windows, rocks and water, alienated sound and inscrutable languages, and relentless close-ups and coolly distanced but thereby all the more emotionally charged long shots help him compose the stark terrain of his films. But Cohen's critical method yields fine surprises and insights as well. Without a detailed and comprehensive treatment of the entire body of work, we might easily miss the readable repertoire of tiny "facial, gestural, and tonal cues" (210) that Bergman elaborates. Just as, for example, smoking a cigarette in a Howard Hawks film is an index of character, stroking someone's cheek in a Bergman film is a kind of synechdochic moral and emotional drama. Cohen's patient analysis of all the films also reveals broader figures in the carpet. For example, he shows the gradual development of Bergman's concern for "the social and even political forces at work on his characters," (264) a much-neglected topic that must supplement the traditional emphasis on Bergman as an existential psychologist and metaphysician.

In such a long book attempting to provide a comprehensive survey of Bergman, some omissions are conspicuous. Apart from scattered references, there is little attention paid to other film-makers whom Bergman learned from and hardly any consideration of the collaborative or ensemble qualities of his work. Bergman subscribes to the romantic conception of the artist as exemplary sufferer and solitary creator, but this does not oblige Cohen to follow suit. And while it is certainly necessary to examine Bergman as a man and artist wriggling between strenuous doubt and equally strenuous faith and self-assertion, Cohen perhaps unduly downplays the recuperative, conciliatory, even comic aspects, broadly defined, of the films. Bergman is a keen observer of the foibles as well as the tragic assaults of life, an artist of shafts of light as well as suffocating darkness, an analyst of surviving as well as dying and killing. These talents need to be acknowledged to complete Cohen's high praise of Bergman as a "rare creature capable of imagining and producing works of excruciating beauty, acute sensitivity, and profound compassion." (156)

SIDNEY GOTTLIEB

■ Sidney Gottlieb teaches at Sacred Heart University; he recently published *Alfred Hitchcock: Selected Writings and Interviews* (University of California Press).

Looks and Frictions

Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory

By Paul Willemen. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press/BFI, 1994. $35.00 cloth; $14.95 paper.

The intersection of contemporary cultural studies and film theory has occasionally been addressed by scholars in both fields, and the disciplines share applications of rhetoric and semiotics, identification and subjectivity, and social and ideological formations. Paul Willemen's work in the British journal *Screen* in the 1970s and as editor of *Framework* in the 1980s incorporated these interdisciplinary perspectives, and *Looks and Frictions* brings together many of his essays from these journals (often re-written) as well as some previously unpublished material. Willemen's career has been characterized, as Meaghan Morris points out in her introduction, by an increasingly activist attitude toward film and cultural studies, a development which is certainly evident in the presentation of diverse essays in this volume. The introduction is a necessary and insightful overview of Willemen's life and career as an active cineaste involved in film festivals as well as conferences, and Morris, who is a recognized cultural critic herself, stresses her admiration for the range and intensity of Willemen's work; she reads the book "as an argument for developing the positive capacities of criticism." (3) Since Willemen's writing is both polemical and yet quite often reflexive, this reading is appropriate.

The twelve essays collected here are most visibly arranged by Willemen's years at *Screen* (Parts One and Two cover 1971 to 1981) and at *Framework* (Part Three covers 1983 to 1989), with the final section devoted to one long essay/dialogue from 1992. While Morris does discuss the chronology of a few essays, it is difficult to get a sense of exactly when many of these articles were written (some endnotes provide clues), which is a particular problem in the first half of the book where the essays are not reproduced in chronological order. Thus, the longest and perhaps most foundational essays in the book (Part One) are followed by some earlier essays that implicitly ask the reader to consider how these examples were later reformulated into Willemen's larger concerns.

The concerns that Willemen expresses in the first half of the book are complex and engaging. In "Cinematic Discourse: The Problem of Inner Speech," he considers many linguistic and psychological explanations of language and identification that were popular in European criticism of the 1970s, borrowing heavily from Roman Jakobson's work and relying on the theories of

ing around inescapable narcissism, divided families, an absent God, and inevitable death; that his characters oscillate between poles of cruelty and humiliation; and that mirrors and windows, rocks and water, alienated sound and inscrutable languages, and relentless close-ups and coolly distanced but thereby all the more emotionally charged long shots help him compose the stark terrain of his films. But Cohen's critical method yields fine surprises and insights as well. Without a detailed and comprehensive treatment of the entire body of work, we might easily miss the readable repertoire of tiny "facial, gestural, and tonal cues" (210) that Bergman elaborates. Just as, for example, smoking a cigarette in a Howard Hawks film is an index of character, stroking someone's cheek in a Bergman film is a kind of synechdochic moral and emotional drama. Cohen's patient analysis of all the films also reveals broader figures in the carpet. For example, he shows the gradual development of Bergman's concern for "the social and even political forces at work on his characters," (264) a much-neglected topic that must supplement the traditional emphasis on Bergman as an existential psychologist and metaphysician.

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Boris Eikhenbaum in applying multiple claims about discourse to cinema. Willemen offers a comprehensive explanation of the notion of inner speech, describing it as a "cement between text, subject, and the social," (42) which remains so encompassing that it is unfortunately difficult to discern his precise linkage of inner speech with cinema. More important at this stage of the book is understanding Willemen's use of psychoanalysis, for he will significantly revise many of his ideas in the later essays. When he proposes that "inner speech is the discourse that binds the psychoanalytic subject and the subject in history," (51) he presages his later cultural studies work in which he will grapple with socio-historical identification, becoming less involved in psychoanalysis and more involved in cultural identity and subjectivity.

This involvement becomes somewhat evident in the next essay, "Notes on Subjectivity," (written three years later), in which Willemen's cinematic examples again serve a larger theoretical argument. He uses Edward Branigan's comparative analysis of two films to exemplify how structures of subjectivity should not be studied, stressing that text readers should not be viewed outside of ideology, social formations, or history. While he may make Branigan's analysis seem more definitive than it is, his argument against text-specific readings is convincing, as he carefully explains the polysemy of the author-text-reader dynamic of communication. For Willemen, subjectivity in cinema must always be considered in terms of its cultural construction, and film studies must account for these constructions, otherwise "films are read unpredictably, they can be pulled into more or less any ideological space, and can be mobilised for diverse and even contradictory critical projects." (70)

The five shorter essays which follow are more specific in their topics and thus provide helpful models of Willemen's critical practice. "The Sirkian System" is an appreciation of Douglas Sirk's films as ideological parodies, and of his style as serving intellectual and industrial demands, originally written at a time (c. 1971) when scholars were first starting to rescue Sirk's films from academic disregard. "The Fourth Look" is a more problematic essay, if only because Willemen attempts to expand Laura Mulvey's triptych of patriarchal cinematic looks (in Hollywood narratives) by claiming a fourth look that, in his rhetoric at least, also limits women as viewers. In looking at the experimental films of Stephen Dwoskin, Willemen sees a "gaze" at the viewer by the film, a "look which constitutes the viewer as visible subject." (107) He thus claims an exhibitionism on the part of the viewer, which nonetheless does not pertain to all films (or genres) nor to all viewers. Dwoskin's films may embody this fourth look most effectively in Willemen's eyes, but this look, and the looks described by Mulvey, have been elaborated in a plurality of ways that Willemen does not acknowledge. "Letter to John" continues Willemen's examination of viewer subjectivity in terms of porn films, posing a critical rebuttal to an article on pornography by John Ellis, although Willemen's argument, to a lesser extent than in his previous essay, still preserves a rather masculinist perspective. "Photogénie and Epstein" is a passionate response to the essentially impossible claims of French "impressionist" critics who believed certain films contained mystical moments of revelation that could not be verbalized. Willemen identifies *photogénie* as a hegemonic construct, and almost implies that its etiology is pathological. The final essay of the *Screen* section, "The Ophuls Text: A Thesis," is a direct consideration of different perspectives on Ophuls' use of the moving camera, offering a brief summary of Willemen's interests in the viewing of cinema.

The second half of the book begins with "An Avant-Garde for the 90s" (published as "for the 80s" in 1984 and *not* updated despite the title), in which Willemen calls for a reconsideration of the cinematic avant-garde that frees it from the constrictive modernist-realist debate and addresses its social and historical context and its production of meaning and ideology. Here you can see a clear move from his more formalist and psychoanalytic readings to the cultural and political, as his attention to historical and aesthetic experiences illustrates his resistance to specificity in intellectual endeavors.

An even more deliberate critique is noticeable in "Bangkok-Bahrain-Berlin-Jerusalem: Amos Gitai's Editing." By arguing stridently against the intellectual elitism of pseudoactivist drives by certain academics and film-makers to protect "the oppressed" from dominant readings, Willemen finds in Gitai's films "a strategy of address that tries to mobilise meanings rather than impose them." (166) Willemen thus continues his fight against hegemony in interpretation, but here seems to miss an important hypothesis: that the shooting and editing of Gitai's (or anyone's) films are often the result of production conditions and are not always predetermined by theoretical concerns.

In "The Third Cinema Question," Willemen provides a solid overview of the history of Third Cinema writings, particularly the manifestoes written by some of its creators. He makes it clear that Third Cinema must not be defined against "dominant" cinema, and that the production and reception of Third Cinema are not reducible to assumed cultural differences in terms of class or nationality (hence the abandonment of "Third World Cinema" as a term). He concludes the essay with a discussion about Mikhail Bakhtin and national identification, which he picks up in his next essay, "The National."

Here Willemen offers a well-articulated account of the ways in which so-called "multicultural" practices actually serve to further marginalize and fetishize the very cultures that are meant to be somehow integrated by a host culture. Where his Third Cinema essay was a fine combination of film studies and cultural history and theory, this essay becomes so absolutist as to imply that virtually no cinema scholar has been able to properly address questions concerning the production of particular socio-cultural formations. Willemen proposes that Bakhtin offers a fruitful rubric for recognizing other cultural practices and understanding them in relation to film studies; he extracts from Bakhtin a notion of "double outsideness," in which "the analyst must relate to his or her own situation as an other, refusing simple identifications with pre-given, essentialised socio-cultural categories." (216) Willemen sees this double outsideness as a "precondition for any useful engagement with 'the national' in film culture," (218) thereby begging the question of just how difficult (or easy) it is to achieve.

The final essay in the book finds Willemen dealing with many of the issues that have characterized his writing for twenty years, although it serves as an odd conclusion. "Through the Glass Darkly: Cinephilia Reconsidered" uses a dialogue (between Willemen and his colleague Noel King) to consider cinephilia, the "desire for cinema," which is an effective device in that Willemen is able to readdress many diverse issues about cinema that have been presented throughout the book, while preserving a certain concern for and curiosity about the future (and possible extinction) of film studies. The piece is simply too long and repetitious, and much of what Willemen has to say about epiphanic moments in cinema lacks the insight or intrigue of his earlier writing. He nonetheless concludes respectfully by stating that he remains "enough of a cinephile still to wonder about cinephilia," (256) and the essay (as well as the entire book) bears testament to that fact.

Paul Willemen distinguishes himself with this collection as an erudite and provocative scholar of the emerging discipline that has become cinematic cultural studies. The looks and frictions he identifies in cinema and criticism offer significant challenges to various notions that have formed among recent generations of film scholars. Despite my disagreements above, I consider most of the arguments expressed in these essays as crucial to film studies now as when they were first written.

TIMOTHY SHARY

■ Timothy Shary is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Communication at the University of Massachusetts.

Melodrama and Meaning

History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk

By Barbara Klinger. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994. $35.00 cloth; $14.95 paper.

Melodrama and Meaning explores the diverse ways in which various institutions have positioned the 1950s melodramas of Douglas Sirk. Barbara Klinger researches the historically changing meanings of the films over the past forty years in order to topple current monological understandings of Sirk. Since the 1970s, academic critics have appropriated Sirk's films as representatives of the progressive text, one capable of self-consciously producing critiques of American bourgeois culture. Klinger argues that this view of Sirk is rooted in auteurist assumptions—in the director's ability to artistically transcend a universally conservative 1950s social climate. Borrowing Janet Staiger's method of a "historical materialist approach to reception studies," (xvi) Klinger uses detailed historical research—what she terms "a contextualist perspective" (160)—in order to topple both the vision of Sirk as monolithically progressive and of the 1950s as monolithically conservative.

Klinger's approach demonstrates "how different historical, cultural, and institutional contexts produced meaning and ideological significance for Douglas Sirk's melodramas from the 1950s to the 1990s." (157) These five contexts are academia, the film industry, review journalism, star discourse, and mass camp. Each chapter works to demonstrate the tentative nature of Sirk's subversiveness by arguing that the meaning of the films is by no means unified and fixed, but instead constantly in flux and out of Sirk's authorial control.

The first chapter explores the historical development of the academic reception of the films. Klinger argues that since the 1970s a critical orthodoxy has developed, solidifying into a vision of Sirk as producer of films subversive of the dominant social order. While this has largely been the case, Klinger's review of the Sirk criticism undervalues significant sites of dissent, such as the work of Brandon French in *On the Verge of Revolt* and Peter Biskind in *Seeing Is Believing*. While Biskind does read Sirk as a leftist film-maker, his vision of the contradictory politics of the 1950s works to challenge Klinger's assumption about the linear trajectory of Sirk criticism during the early 1980s. Klinger's narrative of the consolidation of Sirkian progressivity suppresses the importance of critical debate in order to forward her own argument of uniformity.

Chapter Two is the book's best, wherein Klinger

Here Willemen offers a well-articulated account of the ways in which so-called "multicultural" practices actually serve to further marginalize and fetishize the very cultures that are meant to be somehow integrated by a host culture. Where his Third Cinema essay was a fine combination of film studies and cultural history and theory, this essay becomes so absolutist as to imply that virtually no cinema scholar has been able to properly address questions concerning the production of particular socio-cultural formations. Willemen proposes that Bakhtin offers a fruitful rubric for recognizing other cultural practices and understanding them in relation to film studies; he extracts from Bakhtin a notion of "double outsideness," in which "the analyst must relate to his or her own situation as an other, refusing simple identifications with pre-given, essentialised socio-cultural categories." (216) Willemen sees this double outsideness as a "precondition for any useful engagement with 'the national' in film culture," (218) thereby begging the question of just how difficult (or easy) it is to achieve.

The final essay in the book finds Willemen dealing with many of the issues that have characterized his writing for twenty years, although it serves as an odd conclusion. "Through the Glass Darkly: Cinephilia Reconsidered" uses a dialogue (between Willemen and his colleague Noel King) to consider cinephilia, the "desire for cinema," which is an effective device in that Willemen is able to readdress many diverse issues about cinema that have been presented throughout the book, while preserving a certain concern for and curiosity about the future (and possible extinction) of film studies. The piece is simply too long and repetitious, and much of what Willemen has to say about epiphanic moments in cinema lacks the insight or intrigue of his earlier writing. He nonetheless concludes respectfully by stating that he remains "enough of a cinephile still to wonder about cinephilia," (256) and the essay (as well as the entire book) bears testament to that fact.

Paul Willemen distinguishes himself with this collection as an erudite and provocative scholar of the emerging discipline that has become cinematic cultural studies. The looks and frictions he identifies in cinema and criticism offer significant challenges to various notions that have formed among recent generations of film scholars. Despite my disagreements above, I consider most of the arguments expressed in these essays as crucial to film studies now as when they were first written.

TIMOTHY SHARY

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Melodrama and Meaning

History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk

By Barbara Klinger. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994. $35.00 cloth; $14.95 paper.

Melodrama and Meaning explores the diverse ways in which various institutions have positioned the 1950s melodramas of Douglas Sirk. Barbara Klinger researches the historically changing meanings of the films over the past forty years in order to topple current monological understandings of Sirk. Since the 1970s, academic critics have appropriated Sirk's films as representatives of the progressive text, one capable of self-consciously producing critiques of American bourgeois culture. Klinger argues that this view of Sirk is rooted in auteurist assumptions—in the director's ability to artistically transcend a universally conservative 1950s social climate. Borrowing Janet Staiger's method of a "historical materialist approach to reception studies," (xvi) Klinger uses detailed historical research—what she terms "a contextualist perspective" (160)—in order to topple both the vision of Sirk as monolithically progressive and of the 1950s as monolithically conservative.

Klinger's approach demonstrates "how different historical, cultural, and institutional contexts produced meaning and ideological significance for Douglas Sirk's melodramas from the 1950s to the 1990s." (157) These five contexts are academia, the film industry, review journalism, star discourse, and mass camp. Each chapter works to demonstrate the tentative nature of Sirk's subversiveness by arguing that the meaning of the films is by no means unified and fixed, but instead constantly in flux and out of Sirk's authorial control.

The first chapter explores the historical development of the academic reception of the films. Klinger argues that since the 1970s a critical orthodoxy has developed, solidifying into a vision of Sirk as producer of films subversive of the dominant social order. While this has largely been the case, Klinger's review of the Sirk criticism undervalues significant sites of dissent, such as the work of Brandon French in *On the Verge of Revolt* and Peter Biskind in *Seeing Is Believing*. While Biskind does read Sirk as a leftist film-maker, his vision of the contradictory politics of the 1950s works to challenge Klinger's assumption about the linear trajectory of Sirk criticism during the early 1980s. Klinger's narrative of the consolidation of Sirkian progressivity suppresses the importance of critical debate in order to forward her own argument of uniformity.

Chapter Two is the book's best, wherein Klinger

explores how the film *Written on the Wind* was marketed by Universal upon its release. Klinger delineates an industrially defined genre of the "adult" film and argues the importance of the studio in positioning the film's content with respect to this generic tradition. This historical positioning works to call into question many subsequent academic readings of the film as melodrama, and therefore necessarily subversive.

Chapter Three assesses the changing status of Sirk's films with respect to review journalists. Klinger documents how the contemporary reviewers panned Sirk's films because they were judged to fall short of the standards of realism that were then dominant. Klinger then analyzes the review journalism produced during the late 1970s revivals of Sirk's films. At this juncture, influenced by both the popularization of auteurism and the rise of nostalgia for the 1950s, the reviewers praised Sirk's films.

Chapter Four continues this juxtaposition of the contemporary and current reception of Sirk films. Klinger analyzes the star discourse of Rock Hudson, the leading man in many of Sirk's important 1950s melodramas. Hudson represented the "normal" man in the wake of a crisis of masculinity as signified by such neurotic stars as James Dean and Marlon Brando. Klinger strengthens her case against the presumed subversiveness of the Sirk films via this focus on Hudson's popular image as all-American: "Through these viewing dynamics Sirk's films were truly reduced to star vehicles, contexts for the exercise of a sensibility fixed on the appearance and subsequent imaginary romance with a star who typified certain masculine ideals." (118) Klinger juxtaposes this vision of Hudson's function within Sirk films with his image in the 1980s, after he publicly revealed his gay identity and his infection with the AIDS virus. Klinger argues that star discourse in the 1980s introduced a distancing element into the reception of Hudson's films.

The final case study, in Chapter Five, explores what Klinger labels "mass camp." Distinguishing from gay camp, which she intentionally does not discuss, Klinger argues how the recent accessibility of Sirk films for contemporary middle-class audiences has produced a new context for making meaning out of the films. Using *All That Heaven Allows* as her site for analysis, Klinger demonstrates that the distance between 1990s and 1950s values has produced a camp disjunction. In this case, as in previous chapters, such an exploration reveals how the potential meaning of the film for contemporary audiences is completely out of Sirk's control.

Melodrama and Meaning clearly makes a significant contribution to Sirk criticism. While many recent Sirk commentators, such as Michael Selig and Christine Gledhill, have also begun to undermine Sirk's status as monolithically subversive, Klinger supports this revisionism with historical analysis. For example, one truism of academic Sirk criticism has long been that contemporary audiences did not understand Sirk's critique of their stifling Eisenhower culture, which was expressed by the films' aggressive, Brechtian stylistic flourishes. Only 1970s ideological criticism, equipped to view the schism between content and style, was capable of appreciating Sirk's critique.

Unlike previous Sirk commentators, Klinger stops to explore not *whether* the contemporary audiences understood the "true" meaning of the films, but instead asks *why* their cultural frame of reference would produce a different vision of meaning. In one example, Klinger demonstrates that the discourses of sexuality in *Written on the Wind* which 1970s academic critics read as subversive (Dorothy Malone's "Temptation" dance, for instance), were also part of 1950s contestation over sexuality. Klinger concludes that *Written on the Wind*'s examination of sexuality is not necessarily subversive because of Sirk, but instead stems from the culture's pervasive disputes over issues of sexuality.

Such historical research does not always produce a monolithically conservative reading of Sirk's films. Instead, a vision of the films' polysemic meanings emerges:

> If the "sophisticated family melodrama" attained a transgressive status during this time, it was not because its representations of sexuality proved an exception to the repressive rule of the Eisenhower years; it was because such representations were so much a part of a dominant, and for some objectionable, trend in filmmaking. (56)

Klinger suggests that Sirk's exploration of sexuality may be subversive, not *despite* the cultural context, but precisely *because of* it.

Although recommending the book, I have one reservation. Klinger situates her project against those she terms the "textualists" (xiii)—those interested in textual analysis. *Melodrama and Meaning* at times effectively ridicules the limited insights which textual analysis produces. Klinger forcefully claims that the text has no stable meaning, but instead has an ideological position produced for it by the cultural context, which serves as the frame of reference for reading.

This much is convincingly argued. However, the chapters are uneven in demonstrating why this should ultimately matter. Often, Klinger works to rebut progressive readings of Sirk's films without replacing those readings with an adequate vision of the stakes of engagement with the films themselves. Only one chapter, the exploration of the film industry, accomplishes the blend-

ing of historical investigation with attention to a Sirk film in a truly satisfying manner. I wonder if focusing each chapter on a different Sirk film might have alleviated this concern. While the *Written on the Wind* chapter forced me to re-engage with that text specifically, the other chapters in *Melodrama and Meaning* seem to lose sight of this need for textual engagement. In a sense, I wish the book's subtitle, "History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk," matched its contents a bit more thoroughly.

WALTER METZ

■ Walter Metz is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin.

New Chinese Cinemas

Forms, Identities, Politics

Edited by Nick Browne, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack, and Esther Yau. Cambridge, MA: University of Cambridge Press, 1994. $54.95.

This collection of essays, based on papers given at a UCLA conference on Chinese cinema in January, 1990, is one of the better organized and presented English language books containing or featuring scholarship on Chinese cinema. It provides a fairly extensive representation of recent English language scholarship on Chinese film from all three industries, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. As editor Nick Browne's introduction indicates, all of the book's essays explore a key issue in Chinese film studies in the West: the relationship between Chinese cinema and Chinese history, politics, society, and culture. They also demonstrate the advantages and the drawbacks of combining Chinese cultural and historical studies with Western critical theory.

The relatively new field of Chinese cinema studies has brought together scholars from a variety of backgrounds in an informative exchange of approaches. Illustrative of the field as a whole, the essays in *New Chinese Cinemas* are written by China scholars, film scholars, a literary theorist, a Hong Kong film critic, and Chinese film specialists, all well known in their respective fields, and most stepping beyond the traditional borders of those fields to write about Chinese film.

The essays work fairly coherently as a group, demonstrating the careful combination of Western theory with Chinese cultural and historical specificity. The authors use a variety of Western approaches to illuminate the nature of Chinese cinema: one sees, for example, discussion of Chinese films in terms of various theories concerning Western stage and screen melodrama, spatiality and the viewing subject, and postmodernism. All of these approaches bring forward important aspects of Chinese cinema and its place in world cinema.

Most of the authors are overtly wary, however, of defining Chinese films solely in Western critical terms. Several authors qualify Western approaches in response to Chinese cinema's uniqueness: Chris Berry shows the difficulties, along with the usefulness, of defining a Chinese viewing subject in "Neither One Thing Nor the Other: Toward a Study of the Viewing Subject and Chinese Cinema in the 1980s"; Paul Pickowicz, in "Huang Jianxin and the Notion of Postsocialism" rejects the term "postmodern" as a description of director Huang's films, preferring the more culturally and historically relevant "postsocialist;" and in "The Ideology of Initiation: The Films of Hou Hsiao-hsien," Chinese literature scholar William Tay points out that while Taiwan director Hou's films illustrate the Western formalist definition of the "coming of age" story, that definition does not account for the films' clear grounding in the context of Taiwanese political and societal change.

Indeed, as they must, all of the essays stress the importance of Chinese (or Taiwanese, or Hong Kong) political, societal, and cultural change on the aesthetics of Chinese cinema. Hong Kong film critic Li Cheuk-to and film scholar Esther Yau both illustrate, for example, the effect of Hong Kong's past as a British colony, and future as a part of the People's Republic, on Hong Kong cinema of the 1980s; Yau, in "Border Crossing: Mainland China's Presence in Hong Kong Cinema," devotes much space to the history of Hong Kong's relationships to Britain and to China, and the complex effects of those relationships on Hong Kong culture as a whole, and on cinema in particular. This type of strong emphasis on cultural and historical specificity runs throughout the essays in the collection, and is one of the book's greatest strengths.

Although all of the essays cohere to the extent shown above, the collection is uneven in other ways. The representation given to Taiwan cinema studies, in particular, is relatively sparse: two essays, compared to three for Hong Kong cinema, and four for PRC cinema; furthermore, Fredric Jameson's essay "Remapping Taipei" is reprinted from another source (Jameson's *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World-System*), so the contribution the book makes to this aspect of the field is not as great as it might be. The inclusion of an essay by a Taiwan film critic, for example Peggy Chiao (Chiao Hsiung-p'ing), who also read a pa-

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per at the original UCLA conference, would have provided a fuller picture of this important film culture, as well as some balance with the other two sections of the book.

The editors of this collection have clearly taken some care in its presentation, and with a few exceptions it reads smoothly and clearly, with relatively little repetition among essays, few inaccuracies, and few typographical errors. There are still some problems with Chinese romanization, but admirably few in a collection employing more than one form of romanization. China scholars should be pleased.

Because of its coherent emphasis on cultural and historical change, its relatively balanced representation of scholarship in the field, and its careful presentation, *New Chinese Cinemas* is a great improvement over most books available in English on Chinese cinema studies. I would recommend this book, along with Chris Berry's *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema* (BFI, 1990), to China scholars, film scholars, and anyone interested in learning more about this new and growing field.

STEPHANIE HOARE

■ Stephanie Hoare teaches in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures at Colgate University.

Otherness and Media

The Ethnography of the Imagined and the Imaged

Edited by Hamid Naficy and Teshome H. Gabriel. New York: Harwood Academic Publishers. 1993. $18.00.

In contemporary North America difference has become an everyday phenomenon that proudly presents itself in a wide variety of contexts. Given the visual prominence of everyday difference, the intellectually provocative collection, *Otherness and Media: The Ethnography of the Imagined and the Imaged*, edited by Hamid Naficy and Teshome H. Gabriel, is a much needed addition to the literatures in visual anthropology and cultural/media studies. The collection is a largely successful attempt to update the theorization of difference and its visual representation. "It seems to us," the editors write in their introduction, "that we are entering now . . . a multiple discursive and cultural space—a slipzone of practices in the arts, literature, popular culture, cinema and television—where all kinds of resistive hybridities, syncretism and mongrelizations are possible, valued. . . . "(x) The editors are careful to point out, moreover, that any consideration of the boundaries of difference must also be a critical exploration of the relations of power.

There is an undeniable strength in the diversity of the collection's essays. The contributors bring a wealth of perspectives and textual practices to their engaging papers. Diversity, however, has its underside. In an anthology a diversity of approaches sometimes leads to unevenness. Although all the essays make solid contributions to scholarship in visual anthropology and cultural/media studies, the strongest are those that apply data from longterm fieldwork to the problem of the representation of difference. The contributions of Smadar Lavie and Hamid Naficy are cases in point. Lavie's piece on the Mzeina Bedouin and Naficy's essay on the exile discourse of Iranian television in Los Angeles are sensitive and powerful texts. In these essays, the theoretical ruminations on otherness are compelling; they emerge from the authors' confrontation with a corpus of ethnographic field data. Although Teshome Gabriel's fascinating chapter on the language of memory is not ethnographically based, it nonetheless displays an ethnographic sensibility to othered dimensions of being—an achievement to be celebrated.

The majority of the essays in the collection, however, have little to do with ethnography per se. Many of them are well-honed and impressive textual readings that better situate the issue of difference in theoretical discourse. Some of them, like the articles by Trinh T. Minh-ha and Scott Nygren, are provocatively stimulating philosophical musings. Juxtaposed to them are several critiques of subaltern media practices—all of which leads to some of the aforementioned unevenness.

Christine Holmlund's essay is a feminist critique of a postcolonial criticism that positions itself too easily against the background of mainstream ideas on identity and difference. Holmlund prefers to struggle with the tensions generated by the confrontations of critical theory and textual practice, avant garde and mainstream film, and racial/ethnic and sexual difference. Ella Shohat's piece is an elegant critique of a feminist film theory that has overlooked the contradictions and asymmetries of (post)colonial power relations, relations that tend to feminize the (post)colonial other. Through his reading of *Frank's Place*, the shortlived television sitcom about the multiplicities of African-American social life in New Orleans, Herman Gray discusses the possibilities and limitations of representations of African Americans in commercial television.

Several of the contributors write about national or area cinemas and representational practices. Marvin D'Lugo skillfully demonstrates how Catalan cinema has historically textualized difference in Spain. Philip Rosen

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writes sensitively of how the cinema of Ousmane Sembene, especially his monumental film, *Ceddo*, articulates the ambivalences of the making and remaking of postcolonial states in sub-Saharan Africa. Considering the global political dynamics of transculturalism in contemporary popular music, Iain Chambers argues that "World Music" is "a cultural, economic and historical shift that disputes the very nature of the centre-periphery distinction."(205) In a "bibliographic essay" Martin Blythe considers from the vantage of his own hybridity the terroristic power to name, to represent, to create geographies of the imagination.

The collection ends with two thought-provoking essays. Robert Stam produces highly stimulating and politically sensitive readings of two books on so-called "Third" cinema, Roy Ames's *Third World Filmmaking and the West* and Jim Pines and Paul Willemen's collection, *Questions of Third Cinema*. For her part, Ana López provides an extremely useful overview of recent scholarship on the Latin American cinema.

In an age of inconsistency, fragmentation, and uncertainty, the constraints of space and time remain the reviewer's lament. How can anyone do justice to the richness of thought and texture of expression embodied in *Otherness and Media*? That said, I should also stress that the exigencies of increasingly complicated transnational spaces and transcultural communities demand multifaceted approaches to scholarship and representation. As Holmlund suggests, the tried and true oppositions (critical theory/textual practice; avant-garde/mainstream cinema; racial-ethnic/sexual difference) are today insufficient to illuminate the fissures and fractures in the textual productions of contemporary exiled communities. Textual readings and philosophical musings will continue to be intellectually productive, but in the end, they can only be suggestive. To theorize difference and representation in a compressed world, there will have to be a multidisciplinary commitment to longterm field-based ethnographic research. The empirical foundation of these projects would enable scholars to construct sensitive representations of complex sociocultural and political realities. Given the jagged contours of mongrelized spaces, such an approach would have to stress multiple positionings and a flexibility of methodological approach. Without such an empirically grounded, multiple-positioned ethnography, I'm afraid, our future representations of difference will amount to little more than collections of beautifully melodic songs whistled in the wind.

PAUL STOLLER

■ Paul Stoller teaches in the Department of Anthropology at West Chester University in Pennsylvania.

Shadows on the Past

Studies in the Historical Fiction Film

By Leger Grindon. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994. $44.95 cloth; $18.95 paper.

This careful, intelligent book appears at a moment of renewed interest within cinema studies in the relationship between film and history. Reading a few representative films in depth, *Shadows on the Past* explores the political projects that shape their depiction of historical events. Individual chapters are devoted to Renoir's *La Marseillaise*, Anthony Mann's *The Black Book*, Visconti's *Senso*, Rossellini's *The Rise to Power of Louis XIV*, and Warren Beatty's *Reds*; in addition, discussions of Griffith's and Eisenstein's historical epics are included in the first chapter. Grindon argues that the ideological workings of these fictions are embedded in two major tropes of the historical film: the romance and the spectacle.

Lucidly, even elegantly written and crisply organized, Grindon's readings are illuminated by exceptionally thorough archival research supplemented by several personal interviews with surviving creative personnel. The book's framework of romance/spectacle allows for the consideration of a wide range of issues, and the broad definition of spectacle as "the extrapersonal forces (social, economic, geographic and so forth) bearing on the historical drama" (15) insures attention to relevant formal strategies.

Grindon's chapter on *La Marseillaise* illustrates the operation of his interpretive scheme. His discussion traces the way in which Renoir, through his staging of the historical drama in this 1937 film about the French Revolution, articulated a position on the Popular Front: celebrating its populism by his laudatory depiction of the common people; minimizing its divisiveness by his emphasis on the ideal of national unity; and calling attention to the weakness of its leader Leon Blum by likening him to Louis XVI.

To situate his readings of this film and others within appropriate historiographic traditions, Grindon cites the arguments of a variety of theorists including Foucault, Lukacs, and Braudel at relevant points in the book. A more ambitious study, however, might have made still more of such sources. Ultimately, *Shadows on the Past* treats its films as simple reflections of social events; Grindon never invokes such mediating concepts as Althusser's idea about the relative autonomy of the cultural superstructure, Jameson's notion of the political unconscious, White's theory of narrative patterning, or Bourdieu's conception of the cultural field as a means of

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Studies in the Historical Fiction Film

By Leger Grindon. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994. $44.95 cloth; $18.95 paper.

This careful, intelligent book appears at a moment of renewed interest within cinema studies in the relationship between film and history. Reading a few representative films in depth, *Shadows on the Past* explores the political projects that shape their depiction of historical events. Individual chapters are devoted to Renoir's *La Marseillaise*, Anthony Mann's *The Black Book*, Visconti's *Senso*, Rossellini's *The Rise to Power of Louis XIV*, and Warren Beatty's *Reds*; in addition, discussions of Griffith's and Eisenstein's historical epics are included in the first chapter. Grindon argues that the ideological workings of these fictions are embedded in two major tropes of the historical film: the romance and the spectacle.

Lucidly, even elegantly written and crisply organized, Grindon's readings are illuminated by exceptionally thorough archival research supplemented by several personal interviews with surviving creative personnel. The book's framework of romance/spectacle allows for the consideration of a wide range of issues, and the broad definition of spectacle as "the extrapersonal forces (social, economic, geographic and so forth) bearing on the historical drama" (15) insures attention to relevant formal strategies.

Grindon's chapter on *La Marseillaise* illustrates the operation of his interpretive scheme. His discussion traces the way in which Renoir, through his staging of the historical drama in this 1937 film about the French Revolution, articulated a position on the Popular Front: celebrating its populism by his laudatory depiction of the common people; minimizing its divisiveness by his emphasis on the ideal of national unity; and calling attention to the weakness of its leader Leon Blum by likening him to Louis XVI.

To situate his readings of this film and others within appropriate historiographic traditions, Grindon cites the arguments of a variety of theorists including Foucault, Lukacs, and Braudel at relevant points in the book. A more ambitious study, however, might have made still more of such sources. Ultimately, *Shadows on the Past* treats its films as simple reflections of social events; Grindon never invokes such mediating concepts as Althusser's idea about the relative autonomy of the cultural superstructure, Jameson's notion of the political unconscious, White's theory of narrative patterning, or Bourdieu's conception of the cultural field as a means of

complicating our sense of his overall project. Some such scaffolding could have provided Grindon's book with a more complex organization based on a developing thesis about the nature of historical representation. As it is, the chapters are arranged according to a straightforward chronological scheme.

A greater reliance on theory could also have improved on the book's choice of examples. As it stands, Grindon treats two Italian films, one French and two American. Why these and not others? And why, in particular, focus so much attention on Italian and American productions rather than including examples from other nations? Though Grindon claims in his first chapter that "these productions seemed to me to offer especially apt examples of influential practices and representative trends," (26) he never expands on this statement, leaving the reader to wonder what influential practices and representative trends he is referring to. Some consideration of films of non-Western cultures, for example, might have problematized his controlling ideas of romance and spectacle in provocative ways.

The relatively minor role played by theory in *Shadows on the Past*, however, does not detract from the study's significant virtues, not the least of which is its welcome discussion of gender and class. The former topic is implied in the concept of the romantic couple, the latter in the notion of spectacle (which often consists of pictorial displays of the populace). Contrary to the impression conveyed by more traditional renderings of earlier times, history encompasses more than the actions of great men and the play of abstract ideas. Through its perceptive analysis of the workings of gender and class, *Shadows on the Past* highlights some of history's heretofore shadowed particularities.

VIRGINIA WRIGHT WEXMAN

■ Virginia Wright Wexman is the author of *Creating the Couple: Love, Marriage, and Hollywood Performance.*

Terminal Identity

The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction

By Scott Bukatman. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993. $18.95.

This handsomely produced book links what are at times astute analyses of contemporary media with a strain of postmodernist theory to produce a manifesto proclaiming the "posthuman" merits of the technological future apparently already upon us. Along the way Scott Bukatman attempts to define the "transitional state" we exist in now. (22)

A positive reaction to the book depends on how interested one is in continuing to "separate the human from the technological," which is the way the auhor refers to our contemporary postmodern crisis. "It has become increasingly difficult" to do so, he writes, adding that this is "true, both rhetorically and phenomenologically." (2) To Bukatman, contemporary science fiction "narrate(s) a new subject" who can interface with cybernetic technology. (2) "Terminal identity" is at once "the end of the subject and a new subjectivity constructed at the computer station or television screen." (9) One wonders what Bukatman makes of the billions of humans who aren't playing virtual reality games. While the mere existence of the technology may be of some theoretical interest, the "embodiment of postmodern disembodiment," (188) Bukatman's technological millennialism sweeps his caveats about VR's present-day lacks aside as he charges toward the "posthuman solar system."

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To make his case, Bukatman pulls examples from a variety of media, including film but also books, comic strips, even performance art, moving easily, in one representative passage, from a theorist (Bataille) to a writer (Sturgeon) to a particular film (*2001*). Bukatman is good at this: *Blade Runner* is productively discussed in terms of both architectural theory and Moebius's graphic art, for example. Baudrillard and William S. Burroughs guide Bukatman through Cronenberg's *Videodrome*.

Just as often, however, there's critical misperception: I don't see David Cronenberg, the most coldly analytical film-maker now working (this side of Peter Greenaway, at least), as creating an antirational discourse. (86) It is characteristic of Bukatman's approach that when a real-world reason offers itself for J. G. Ballard's affectless early fiction (in his autobiographical later works on his traumatized youth)

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Bukatman passes this off as "offering only another possible interpretive layer." (7) Bukatman would appear to prefer life inside a theoretical hall-of-mirrors rather than confronting the real world where biological subjects suffer and die.

Bukatman's book moves to a climax in which the death of humanity, as now constituted, is celebrated as inevitable. This is accomplished by a variety of means, through a rhetoric of inevitability, for instance: the "overlap of technology and biology" is a "fundamental, existent, cyborg fact." (322) And through political attitudinizing: the creation of electronic simulacra (à la Max Headroom) is "radical," while the retention of a subjective "meat" body is "reactionary." (259) William Gibson's notion of "an essential humanity untainted by the electronic conditions of being" is also "reactionary"; the future belongs to *Videodrome*'s "new flesh." (324)

Bukatman does add the caveat that he speaks simply "in the ideological sense" about the posthuman, (323) but even if he is only waxing theoretical, which elements of these works does he endorse? "[T]echnology imposes itself upon human experience to such a degree that the very concept becomes irredeemable." (15) "We no longer speak of flesh . . . but now of terminal flesh and the fusion of biology with electronics." (295) The examples he gives us, however, are Swiss artist H. R. Giger's model for the creature in *Alien* and a Survival Research Laboratory video with "an amazingly beautiful slow-motion shot of an animal carcass, suspended on cables, slowly being pulled in half." (289) To Bukatman, this sort of "techno-surrealism might describe a trajectory for real change," (298) but to me Bukatman and the cyberpunk millenialism he "inscribes" represent yet another stage in the recurring rhetoric of technophila that extends back in this century to the Futurists. Meanwhile, his evident distaste for the body (and the physical world it exists in), is redolent of the gnostics, Saint Augustine, or the Book of Revelations.

It is thus disturbing, but not surprising, to read Bukatman's peroration defining the "transcendence" found in "a surrender" to a "fragmented posthuman" status. (329) In a footnote, Bukatman quotes Jameson's dismissal of Walter Benjamin's condemnation of fascism's "'aestheticization' of reality":

> "[H]e thought it meant fascism, but we know it's only fun. . . . "

To Bukatman, following Jameson, postmodernist play is "fun . . . a commodity rush . . . far from the fascism that Walter Benjamin feared." (333) However, I think Benjamin was right, Jameson and Bukatman wrong, and the "being degree zero" or "subject annihilation" Bukatman concludes so triumphantly with (325) would be a hellish "fragmented posthuman" existence indeed.

This is a murky, endless book which mistakes clotted, circular assertions for brilliant insights. Despite this, the book wouldn't have been so difficult to read if I weren't so averse to Bukatman's ideas.

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■ Gregg Rickman is writing a book about Philip K. Dick.

Book Notes

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But there are pieces that don't hold up as well. The yearly survey question, "Is there a relation between Dream and Film?", brings only few replies, none particularly noteworthy. And Michael Almereyda's examination of small-scale movie-making on a Fisher-Price PXL video camera feels self-indulgent at best.

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JAMES L. NEIBAUR

Boyer, Jay. *Sidney Lumet*. New York: Twayne, 1993. $26.95 cloth; $15.95 paper. Jay Boyer's short volume is a packed, useful survey of a dozen of the prolific director's films. Boyer outlines the making and reception of his well-selected works, and shines in paying close attention to Lumet's filming and editing choices. These close readings pay large dividends, as he shows, for example, how *Dog Day Afternoon*'s opening montage not only sets a tone for the film but how it introduces important characters (Sonny's family) and objects (a jet plane).

Boyer's reportage falls short, however, as a way of arguing for Lumet's importance as a film-maker. Films such as *Network* and Lumet's strong films on New York City police under stress (*Serpico*, *Prince of the City*, *Q & A*) cry out for extended commentary on their complex meanings, but don't get it. Boyer's reading of *Network*, for instance, concludes with the film's final image and sound, yet leaves the reader hanging; similarly, he comments that *The Wiz* "hardly found a word of praise" on its release, and then devotes several pages to outlining how successfully it achieved its effects, never returning to answer the question why we should care. If the director's besetting sin is a lack of clear point of view on his subjects, Boyer follows him in this, concluding weakly that Lumet is "sometimes a maker of message films, and sometimes of fluff, sometimes successful in what he sets out to do, and sometimes not."

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But there are pieces that don't hold up as well. The yearly survey question, "Is there a relation between Dream and Film?", brings only few replies, none particularly noteworthy. And Michael Almereyda's examination of small-scale movie-making on a Fisher-Price PXL video camera feels self-indulgent at best.

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In these two examples of genre-collecting, Mick Broderick in *Nuclear Movies* has the wider sweep, as his subtitle makes clear. Broderick has turned up more than 850 titles worldwide that fit his loosely conceived category, ranging far beyond the United States and Europe, with examples from silent films preoccupied with the mysteries of radium (but why leave out *The Crazy Ray*?) down to the *Toxic Avenger* series.

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Unlike Broderick, Babington and Evans don't range the world for their examples but stay generally within the confines of the Hollywood product. But for all their weighty bibliography, there is little synthesizing of the uses to which Hollywood has put the Bible, or how the subject of religion connects with the subject of film. The "biblical narrative" of the subtitle is hardly treated beyond a perfunctory reference to Robert Alter.

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S. P.

D'Agostino, Annette M. *Harold Lloyd: A Bio-Bibliography*. Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1994. $59.95. Opening with a chronology of events, this book then provides an annotated biography which does well encompassing the comedian's life in just over fifty pages, while also providing brief bios of performers like Chaplin and Keaton as they're mentioned in context. Along with a complete listing of film credits, the author also provides extensive listings of Lloyd's radio and television work, music and recordings, and awards and tributes. The bibliography is missing a few notable titles, but does include several books like *The Disney Films* in which Lloyd is mentioned only in passing.

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J. L. N.

Karlin, Fred. *Listening to Movies: The Film Lover's Guide to Film Music*. New York: Shirmer Books, 1994. $35.00. While there exist several excellent books on film scoring, few are as lavishly produced, well illustrated, and rich in detail and citation as this one. Karlin's is a general-interest book, written without technical jargon for lay readers. He discusses how music is planned and composed for films, principles by which a score may be evaluated, the careers and credits of individual composers, the rules that govern how Oscars are awarded for various categories of film music. A filmography lists the composers for 1500 films, and an appendix directs the reader to specialty sound-track distributors.

A film composer himself, Karlin brings an insider's views to the subject, along with abundant film references and interviews with composers. An especially valuable section is a detailed cue-by-cue breakdown of the scores to eight films ranging from *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) to *The Untouchables* (1987), analyzing how the action of each film was spotted along with its musical style, concept, and thematic organization.

S. P.

LoBrutto, Vincent. *Sound-on-Film: Interviews with Creators of Film Sound*. New York: Praeger, 1994. $65.00 cloth; $19.95 paper. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in film sound. LoBrutto (author of the excellent *By Design: Interviews with Film Production Designers*) has assembled an incisive series of 27 interviews with a wide-range of sound personnel: supervising sound editors, production mixers, music mixers, Foley performers, ADR (automatic dialogue replacement) mixers, and sound designers. By allowing production personnel to speak for themselves, and by engaging them in a sustained and intelligent manner, LoBrutto offers a rare, up-close portrait of the fundamentals of creating sound for the cinema.

The interviews provide rich and abundant information about issues of sound creation and design in contemporary and classical Hollywood films, with Walter Murch telling how the concept of sound design originated in the challenge of mapping sound for quadrophonic space.

Jim Webb, Robert Altman's production mixer in the 1970s, furnishes a detailed portrait of the development of multitrack recording in Altman's revolutionary work. Supervising sound editor Frank Warner explains the powerful effects that can be obtained by employing non-literal sound, such as the subliminal use of sampled music and animal noises in the fight scenes of *Raging Bull*. Richard Anderson, who supervised sound editing on the restoration of *Lawrence of Arabia*, explains how he matched the sound restoration to the thinner, less detailed tracks in use when the film was produced instead of taking advantage of contemporary capabilities.

LoBrutto's respondents are extremely articulate about the concepts and goals that guide their work, and the detailed portraits they offer of the issues and strategies involved in creating film sound provide essential data for critics and theorists of cinema sound. Lay readers will find this to be an interesting and enjoyable account.

S. P.

Locke, Meryl and Charles Warren, eds. *Jean-Luc Godard's* Hail Mary: *Women and the Sacred in Film*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993. $29.95 cloth; $14.95 paper. This excellent volume contains a shot-by-shot breakdown of Godard's controversial film, its dialogue in English and in French, other reference material including interviews with the filmmaker, and twelve essays on the film from a variety of approaches. More than in most contemporary anthologies, spiritual questions dominate these essays. It is a rare occasion indeed when theologians (Robert Kiely, Harvey Cox) appear alongside such theorists as Laura Mulvey and Vlada Petric. Stanley Cavell's interest in philosophical questions about "whether thinking, say spirit, is representable on film, and in which ways film represents body, say flesh" truly make him this volume's animative spirit.

The most instructive essay in this reader, however, was Sandra Laugier's demonstration of how the thought of the French psychoanalyst François Dolto underpinned Godard's project. The film's unique exploration of this particular Holy Family is seen as coming straight from the pages of Dolto's *The Gospel at the Risk of Psychoanalysis* (1977).

G. R.

Oderman, Stuart. *Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle: A Biography of the Silent Film Comedian, 1887–1933*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1994. $29.95. Young, Robert, Jr. *Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle: A Bio-Bibliography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994. $59.95. It has long been a sore point among comedy film buffs that Roscoe Arbuckle is remembered for the 1921 sex scandal that ruined his career, rather than for his innovative and quite brilliant work as a silent screen clown. It is heartening, then, that two books examining his life and work have been released almost simultaneously.

Oderman's biography is essential in its details about Arbuckle's vaudeville roots as well as his first movie successes at Mack Sennett's Keystone studios. Drawing

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A Biographical Dictionary is a wonderful book for those who have already made up their mind about the artists Thomson alternately skewers and praises. Those attuned to his critical stance (pure 1960s auterism, inflected by a sharp disaffection for what to him is uplift and humbug) will be happy, while others will be appalled, or pleased and appalled in equal measure.

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Van Peebles, Melvin. *The Making of Sweet, Sweetback's Baadasssss Song.* (Collector's Edition.) Ann Arbor, MI: Neo Press, 1994. $17.95. It's been almost 25 years since the urban action anti-hero in Melvin Van Peebles' *Sweet, Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971) jolted audiences with the following warning of imminent black male vindication so characteristic of the by-any-means-necessary, burn-baby-burn era in which it was produced: "WATCH OUT! . . . A BAADASSSSS NIGGER IS COMING BACK TO COLLECT SOME DUES!" and, while Van Peebles' existential tale of a pimp-turned-revolutionary remains just as cogent today as it was in the 1970s, the new edition of his making-of-the-film book first published by Lancer Books has lost none of the angst of the original in the post-Reaganite 1990s. An admixture of autobiography, epistolary narrative, and nuts-and-bolts guerrilla film praxis, the book is a hybrid confessional containing the script for the film, the production notes and personal diaries of the filmmaker, stills of the cast, as well as the now legendary letter Van Peebles wrote to Motion Picture Association of America President Jack Valenti protesting the censorship of his work with an "X" rating. Van Peebles countered with "Rated X by an all-white jury!"

The work is also the prototype for others which came after it such as Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It: Inside Guerrilla Filmmaking* (1987), Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of an African American Woman's Film* (1992), Isaac Julien's *Diary of a Young Soul Rebel* (1991), John Singleton's *Poetic Jus-*

from past interviews with Arbuckle's friends and acquaintances like Frank Capra, Gloria Swanson, and Lillian Gish, as well as noted comedy film scholar William K. Everson, Oderman presents an informative, workmanlike look at the comedian's life and career. His extensive interviews with Arbuckle's first wife, Minta Durfee, add great authenticity. Unfortunately, few details are included about the comedian's work after the Virginia Rappe rape scandal, with little on the films he helmed under the pseudonym William Goodrich, and nothing about his uncredited contribution as a writer at RKO.

Robert Young, Jr.'s *Bio-Bibliography* is thorough: there is a biographical section detailing Arbuckle's life and career in abbreviated form, with a more biased examination of the 1921 scandal than the Oderman book (the author here clearly believes Arbuckle's complete innocence). After a chronology and reprints of three articles from Arbuckle's career, there follows a complete listing of theater credits, an annotated filmography, a videography, a listing of stage and film portrayals, a bibliography of books and articles, and an index.

The filmography is most impressive in its details about the little known RKO and Educational Pictures shorts that Arbuckle directed and sometimes wrote for other comedians. The Vitaphone comeback shorts released just before his death are also summarized fully.

J. L. N.

Steel, Dawn. *They Can Kill You, But They Can't Eat You: Lessons From the Front.* New York: Pocket Books, 1993. $22.00. Ever wonder why so many Hollywood films are *so* thoroughly rotten (even if they are fun to deconstruct)? Then read Dawn Steel's *They Can Kill You, But They Can't Eat You* and wonder no more. By her own admission Steel is no artist; she's a businessperson, and a good one. She's brutal in negotiations, fights like a tiger to get her movies made, and plays to win. The only trouble is that the films she cares about are absolutely *terrible*. Reflecting on her tenure at Columbia, and her replacement of David Puttnam as production chief, Steel notes that "Puttnam thought that [*Ghostbusters II* and *Karate Kid III*] were just crass and commercial movies. To us, they were unmined gems." (244) Steel *is* rightfully proud of her part in restoring *Lawrence of Arabia* in 1988, when it was discovered that the original negative was decomposing, and at least that's something we can thank her for. But for the most part, this is a book about how to turn out junk for cash.

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JOHN E. WILLIAMS

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The author spent several years amassing over 500 hours of interviews with family members, friends, actors, film-makers, critics, lovers, and enemies of Sam Peckinpah. He has skillfully interwoven their words with information about the director's life, career, and films, and condensed them into 578 readable pages. The longest of the book's 11 chapters is a fascinating account of the making and aftermath of Peckinpah's masterpiece, *The Wild Bunch*, from which the title comes. Weddle captures the drama and chaos of shooting on location 80 days in Mexico by quoting members of the cast and crew about their experiences and perspectives on the director. We learn that Peckinpah shot 333,000 feet of film using 1,288 camera set ups; that the final print was 2 hours and 31 minutes long and had 3,642 cuts (six times the average number at that time); and that Peckinpah perfected his auteur style with this film: doing scenes over and over, using six cameras running at different speeds and shooting at different angles, and editing scenes by cutting together shots in regular, fast, and slow motion. The results, often violent footage, produced images not seen before; violent images having aesthetic properties that were at once exhilarating and repulsive to watch.Said Peckinpah: "The point of the film is to take this facade of movie violence and open it up, get people involved in it so that they are starting to go in [sic] the Hollywood television predictable reaction syndrome, and then twist it so that it's not fun anymore, just a wave of sickness in the gut."

Weddle identifies recurrent themes in Peckinpah's work—betrayal (by lovers, friends, business associates, self), changes (as the Old West confronts the 20th century), and territorial imperative (*Straw Dogs*, the film he considered his most personal). The author shows enthusiastic appreciation of Peckinpah's work and sympathizes with his troubled life, yet maintains critical distance from his subject. This is not a fan's notes nor is it an exposé. It sometimes reads like a novel, at other times like a diary, but always makes the reader a participant in the director's personal and professional triumphs and failures. Sam Peckinpah began as a writer and director of TV Westerns in the 1950s, winning acclaim for his own series, "The Westerner." He went on to make 14 feature films of varying quality between 1961 and 1983. At the end, he was living in a trailer and was heavily into booze and cocaine. His last project was a Julian Lennon video documentary for MTV. This is the latest book on Sam Peckinpah. It may also be the best.

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Cinema is an enlarged and corrected version of his earlier investigation in *Asian Trash Cinema* 1.1 (1992). Covering some 590 films, the book contains an introduction by Ledbetter, author foreword, notes on deciphering the Chinese language, and an alphabetical listing from A (John Woo's 1986 *A Better Tomorrow*) to Z (Tsui Hark's 1983 *Zu Warriors from the Magic Mountain*). Lavishly illustrated with black-and-white and color stills, it contains indexes to directors and various Hong Kong cinematic genres (cops, gangsters, war films, comedy, graphic violence, documentary, drama, fantasy, and horror). Weisser also lists many relatively unknown films such as *The God of Gamblers*, *Aces Go Places*, *Erotic Ghost Story*, and the *Chinese Ghost Story* series, as well as noting another gangster film director often overshadowed by John Woo—Ringo Lam.

The work is a guide book by a devoted fan, not one of detailed academic scholarship. It contains a listing of films Weisser is familiar with. Many videos currently available are not listed, such as the female gangster movie *Queen of the Underworld*, the *Blue and the Black* series, and Angela Mao Ying movies. However, Weisser may be forgiven for omissions and occasional errors. If a definitive encyclopedia of Hong Kong cinema emerges, it may resemble a telephone directory. This work is introductory, providing an entry into a diverse field, and for that we must be grateful.

TONY WILLIAMS

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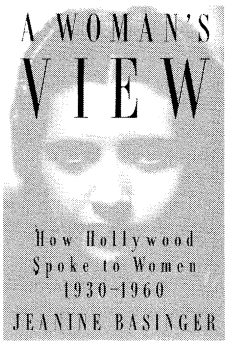

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CHARLES WARREN, editor

Eleven of America's foremost filmmakers, critics, and writers consider nonfiction film both as document and as creative work with strong artistic, political, and moral implications.

Contributors—Jay Cantor, Robert Gardner, Patricia Hampl, Maureen Howard, Susan Howe, Helene Keyssar, Phillip Lopate, Vlada Petric, William Rothman, Charles Warren, Eliot Weinberger

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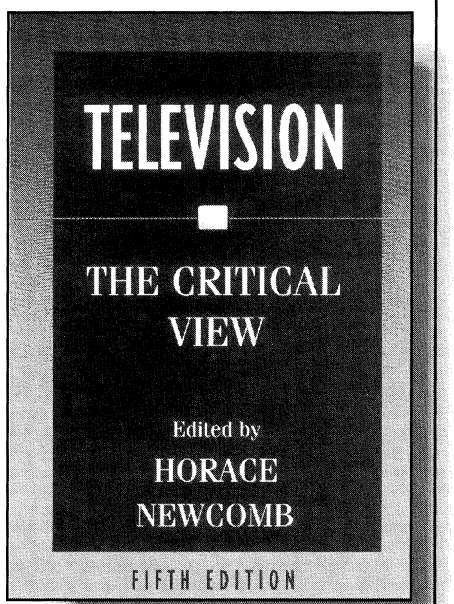

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